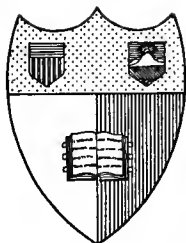


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CO-OPERATION & NATIONALITY

**A Guide for Rural
Reformers from this
to the Next Generation**

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GEORGE W. RUSSELL
(Æ.)

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CO-OPERATION AND
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CO-OPERATION AND NATIONALITY

A GUIDE FOR RURAL REFORMERS
FROM THIS TO THE NEXT GENERATION
BY GEORGE W. RUSSELL (Æ)

MAUNSEL AND COMPANY, LIMITED,
96 MIDDLE ABBEY STREET, DUBLIN

1912

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*To Sir Horace Plunkett, Father Thomas
Finlay, and Robert A. Anderson, three
good comrades, I dedicate this meditation
over the outcome of their work in Ireland.*

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CO-OPERATION AND NATIONALITY

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM OF RURAL LIFE

I have heard people speak as if Ireland were a freak, as if our national problems were absolutely unique, and we could learn little or nothing from other countries. Agricultural co-operation, for example, might suit farmers in other lands, but it was either too high or too low for us. The creamery system was a disastrous departure from our ancient methods of butter-making. We would starve our children if milk and eggs could be sold at higher prices, for it would make these wholesome articles too costly a luxury for the home. All this and much more has been gravely urged. It was natural enough, when the majority of the people were trying to show how impossible government from Westminster was, that every cause, reasonable or unreasonable, should be urged to emphasize our unique character and the hopelessness of other people understanding us sufficiently to let us develop happily. Anything which would show our problems were not unique seemed to destroy an argument for self-government, and it looked as if we might at last shape ourselves into a national freak which would justify, not self-government, but control by the Commissioners for Lunacy. Luckily it is now being recognized that there are stronger arguments for and against self-government than the exhibition of our people as

freaks, and we can learn many things from other countries without injury to our Irish pride. We are gradually being won back to humanity, and men are learning that the problems of rural life in Ireland are not so very different in character from those which statesmen have to solve in Europe or America. We can see now that people migrate from rural Ireland for reasons nearly identical with those which make the Italian peasant emigrate, or make the American cultivator leave his farm and go to the cities. It is admitted that inefficient government is one of the causes here, but it would be as easy to prove there is inefficient government everywhere. Government is inefficient because statesmen have not yet agreed upon the remedy for rural depopulation. There is no general agreement even among those who personally are affected by the changes which are going on, and the truth about these or any other subjects must become almost a platitude before governments will accept it, or foster a new idea. The problem of how best to keep a rural population happily contented on the land has been too suddenly presented to the world for any complete answer yet to be made. It only assumed an urgent aspect within the last half century, and at first it was difficult to disentangle temporary causes from those which steadily and inevitably operate. In Ireland it began after the famine, and if the cause was transitory it was quite sufficient to explain the flight from Ireland for a considerable number of years. But it does not explain the continued flight from the land which goes on to-day in Ireland, as in England or Europe, and even in the United States, which has admitted many millions from Europe, but whose agricultural population has remained stagnant during the half century in which these people were swept from the land in Europe. The

American cities received them, but comparatively few found their way to the land. The man born on the land once he sets foot in the cities seems rarely to want to return. Why is there this migration from rural districts? Why this dislike to life on a farm? Why in half a century should rural life seem to be in danger of breaking up? The beast replaces man in Ireland, the deer forest in Scotland, the game preserve in England, and in rural America the machine with a dozen men to guide it replaces a hundred who have given up the fight. History so far back as we can see shows nothing like this. It is a new problem, and to solve it properly we must disentangle the temporary causes from those which must steadily and inevitably operate until a remedy is found.

The thoughts of the world have been too much with the cities, and they have never sent out the missionaries of civilization into the country. Wealth has shot out its offshoots: here and there a villa, a castle, a palace; but these were rural exotics, and the countrymen had no part in them. There has been no fine civilization, no really well organized system of rural society. Civilization has passed the farmer by. Babylon and Nineveh sent up their towers to heaven, but the farmers on Chaldean plains toiled in the same way before the cities were built, while they were in their glory and long after they were heaps of ruins. Rome had its palaces along the Tiber, and it held the ancient world in fee, but, if it had any effect on the ancient Italian farmer, it was to injure his interests by the gathering of political power into the hands of those who dreaded the outcry of the Roman populace, and sacrificed all other interests to please the mob which swarmed so perilously close to the gates of its dictators' palaces. In a country of great cities political power, owing

to the easy organization of opinion among city populations, is almost always used to benefit the city populations. This is true to-day, even when the daily paper comes to the man in the farm and tells him what is being done against his interest in the town, and it must have been still more true in ages when the countryman heard little or nothing of what fate was being decreed for him. He was oppressed by forces he could only dimly analyze. He heard of wonderful things at the centre of life, but he had no part in them. Civilization in historical times has been a flare-up on a few square miles of brick and mortar. Outside the cities there have always been the same mean houses, the same implements of labour, the same ignorance, want of education, the same oblivion of the finer things in life.

The farmers have generally suffered more as the cities increased. The city is always wresting from the country its arts and industries. Weaving and spinning and other employments are gone irrevocably from the home to the factory. A crowd of keen-witted business men have come with offers to the farmer. They will make his butter for him, sell his stock, market his produce, manufacture his bacon, buy his requirements, even bake his bread for him, and wherever the farmer has yielded and given way to these insidious offers he has become poorer than before, his intellect less active, and the countryside has grown more lifeless and deserted.

So long as travel was difficult, dangerous and expensive, all this did not lead to a rural exodus. Before a girdle had been put around the world, when for the ignorant countryman to leave his country was to adventure among fancied giants, anthropophagi, and men whose heads did grow beneath their shoulders; when to venture across the seas was perhaps to be washed down by the gulfs or to be lost

to humanity upon the Happy Isles, the countryman, unless exceptionally adventurous or exceptionally oppressed, remained where he was as long as he could and endured his fate, and tried to make himself happy with rustic sports, and prosperous by communal organization and mutual aid. But the powers that were over him mistrusted his communal organizations and broke them up, and they then educated him for rural life by a system which was a very inferior replica of the education of a townsman, or else they neglected his education altogether; and when the train began to hurry swiftly across the land and the steamship across the sea, and fares were cheap, the long pent-up disgust with their lot broke out among the countrymen and the rural exodus began. The world, so vast and vague in its girth to the ancients, has been dwindling through the centuries, and it has now collapsed to the size of Ireland one hundred years ago. A man can go nearly half round the world now in the time it would have taken him at the beginning of last century to travel from Kerry to Antrim. He can easily find out all he wants to know about distant lands and the life of their cities. The world is all spread out before the agricultural labourers and before the farmers' sons and daughters to choose where they will live, and more and more they elect to live the city life. The farm labourer does not see why he should labour from dawn to dusk for twelve shillings a week, when he could earn twice that sum in a town, and work for shorter hours at a less exhausting occupation in an atmosphere of life and activity which is in itself an endless wonder and attraction to one bred in the silence of the fields. The world is spread out before the countryman, and in the competition for population the life which is most attractive will win. We hear the cry of "Back

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to the land" continually, but for one who returns a thousand go away. The life which offers most, which seems most intense and most alluring, wins, and small holdings' acts, land acts, peasant proprietorships, and like remedial measures, touch only the fringe of the problem. Why, in the New England States there are at the present time about twenty-six thousand derelict farms once held by freeholders. They had everything and more than everything we are trying to give our Irish farmers, and where are they now? The cities nodded and beckoned to the children of the farm and they went, as they are going, and will go, in spite of small holdings, land acts, labourers' plots, and the rest, if the miracle is not wrought and the countryside made a place where a man can enjoy the fullest and freest development of his spiritual, intellectual and social powers. Can the miracle be wrought? It is this question I will try to answer.

CHAPTER II

PAST AND PRESENT CONDITIONS

The miracle to be wrought is the creation of a rural civilization. Civilization implies some measure of luxury and comfort. It can only be attained when the community is organized and has strength to retain some surplus of wealth beyond what is required for the bare necessities of life. The organized industries, the organized communities, are always wresting any surplus from the unorganized. It is the recognition of this which has made labour parties arise, a portent in the modern world, conscious of the limitless power they may use, and with limitless desires too growing as the vistas unfold, and they see the earth and the fulness of it may be theirs. Farmers who are assuredly labourers are as yet for the most part unorganized, no vista has unfolded before them, and no goal is in sight. The feet run swiftly only when the mists are dispersed and the end of the path is clear. Because the farmer is more isolated by the nature of his employment than any other class, he is the last to be organized, and his industry has suffered more in modern times than any other. Mutual aid, co-operative action—clan or communal—were instinctive with ancient rural communities. This was the true foundation on which alone a rural civilization could be built up, for it gave strength and power to retain a just proportion of the wealth the community produced. But when the State broke up the clan or communal system, the small farmer

became a pathetic figure in the modern world. He was like a small cockleshell of a boat suddenly cut adrift from an ocean liner and left powerless at the mercy of the waters. He was no longer a part owner of the land he tilled, but a tenant labouring on it by another's permission. Then the manufacturer began in the towns to produce cheaply and on a large scale many things previously produced by rural or home industries, which when carried on in the country made life more varied, intelligence more active, and therefore more satisfied. The country man began to find his activities confined within rapidly narrowing limits. Hordes of keen-witted business men began to handle his produce, they occupied all the roads to the markets, they did his business for him, fixed the prices for his stock and crops, and saw to it that riches should not prove hereafter a stumbling block at his entrance into the kingdom of Heaven. Those who brought his requirements into the district had the same watchful care over his chances of future happiness. He was doubly saved. I do not say that these forces acted with conscious enmity to the farmer. They were mostly efforts to help him, as well intentioned as the elephant who, seeing some motherless chickens, said, "I will be a mother to the poor little things," and lay down on them to keep them warm. Tragi-comic legend thought it unnecessary to develop the further history of that clutch. The Irish elephants have lain down heavily on the farmers and have obliterated many of the brood they were intended to rear.

I know it will arouse vehement protest when I say that farmers in Ireland have suffered as much from middlemen as from landlords, though they were quite right in striving first of all for security of tenure of the land they cultivated. It was quite clear to the farmer how much of his income went to the landlord

while he had no means of calculating the toll levied off him by the middlemen who bought and sold for him. The small farmer who came from a remote parish, and drove his pigs for miles into a fair, had no means of knowing how much he was docked of the true value of his stock by the gang of jobbers who met in a hotel the night before and fixed a price. He might occasionally learn that eggs were sold at one and sixpence a dozen in the town while he was getting eightpence for them, and that paid not in cash but in high-priced tea and sugar; but how was he to know that the difference in the price received by the producer and the price paid by the consumer did not represent fairly the cost of collection and distribution? The uncertainty of the small farmer's income left him an easy victim to the sharp-witted business man with money to lend or credit to give, and in Ireland many a small farmer's bones have been picked clean by this fraternity. I have heard people with secure incomes crying out against the frequent borrowing of the farmer. They wonder that the virtue of paying as one goes is not world-wide. But an income which depends largely on the state of the weather yawns with empty gulfs; it has so many cracks, gaps and fluctuations that the virtue in question, no matter how bravely it struggles, often goes under. A farmer is not like a government official whose income, so long as he does not misbehave, arrives as surely as the full moon, differing only from the moon in that it waxes and never wanes. The farmer's income is subject to all kinds of buffets, now a storm reduces it to a moribund condition, now a sudden inrush of foreign produce lurches up against it and makes it weak and dizzy; and it is subject to systematic squeezing by middlemen. The shout of the hungry townsman to producers in distant countries is: "Come to us! The more in our market

the better," and the solitary protest of the home farmer to keep them away is lost amid the folding of the hills. Credit is an absolute necessity to the small farmer, and over three-quarters of our Irish farmers are men of this class. In their necessity they seek credit wherever they can get it easiest. Demand creates supply, and in response to the demand for agricultural credit there arose in Ireland during the last century whole hordes of credit-giving freebooters. There were the trust auctioneers in the north, the butter merchants in the south, and private loan offices in the towns, and the gombeen man nearly everywhere, but always found with certainty in the poorest districts, where the thinner the farmer the stouter was the trader.

All these agencies of credit presented the fairest front. They "always helped the poor farmer in his need," but they wanted a good deal more than the farmer, and they took it. Nothing could be more reasonable and benevolent than the theory of the trust auctioneer, that under his system, where credit was given to the purchaser for four months, the poor farmer was enabled to buy a cow and pay at leisure. Yet see this benevolent system in operation! A number of men want money. They drive their beasts into the auctioneer's yard; one of these men offers the cattle for sale as if they were his, and the others bid them up to a good round price. The auctioneer pays cash with a discount of five or seven per cent. off to the supposed seller. He gets promissory notes due in four months from the supposed purchasers with five or seven per cent. added on, and he sees that the names on the bills are good enough to secure him. There are auction fees at five per cent. Then the men drive the cattle home to the sheds they left in the morning, and they divide the money between them, which was what they

really wanted. They have four months to scrape up cash to meet the bills. The philanthropist has his discount, interest, and auction fees as his reward for "helping the poor farmer." In Ulster this system has ruined many, and it is coming downwards into the midlands like the growth of a swift disease. Men in necessity auction off anything, their fields, their future crops, their grazing, anything which can be auctioned. A father sells it and a son or neighbour buys it in. I know of one cow on which over seventy pounds was raised in a month after journeys north, south, east, and west. But that cow, after hearing great bidding in the trust auctioneer's premises "about it and about," was like Omar Khayyam in his search for truth, for it "evermore came out by the same door wherein it went." In the south of Ireland the butter merchants wore the same affable air as the trust auctioneer. In the spring a small farmer's thoughts turn naturally to credit, and whom should he appeal to but his patron the butter merchant? He borrowed from him, and he was accommodated with a loan from which the moderate interest of ten per cent. was first abstracted. The farmer was pledged to sell all the butter he produced through the season to this butter-buyer. At one time, before the creamery system began, the Cork butter merchants held all Munster in fee. They paid the tied producer three shillings per cwt. less than the export price which the free farmers received, and graded his butter as they listed. They grew to be great and wealthy citizens, and they said Ireland was being ruined when the farmers began to build creameries of their own and sold their butter illegitimately in the English market themselves. They still carry on a paying business though it is dwindling in dimensions. The higgler repeats the system on a smaller scale.

The private loan offices in Ireland are like such offices everywhere. The loan fund societies are little better. I bring no charge against the large banks, whose interest is moderate enough, except this, that the system of three or four months' bills is unsuitable to the farmers' industry, and the towns in which their branch offices are situated are often a long distance from the farm, and the farmer is put to heavy expenses bringing in his sureties, treating them according to ancient custom, giving them a dinner and keeping them in good humour so that they will renew if required. These expenses, taken together with the interest, often made a loan cost twenty or thirty per cent. If a man is buying young pigs it may be seven months before they will be ready for sale, and an inelastic system of credit which forces expensive renewals does not really help the borrower, but cripples him. However, these large banks, if unsuitable in their methods, are on the whole fair and just in their charges, and I hope to show later on how they may be tapped by small farmers in a way less expensive to themselves.

There remains now the one universal credit-giver—the rural trader. I find it difficult to write calmly of the abuses of the credit system which once prevailed all over Ireland, and which still prevail in many districts, but especially in the west. Nothing is easier for the farmer than to run into debt at one of these country shops. He is invited to help himself to everything the shop contains up to certain well-defined limits. He may be allowed a year or a year and a half to be behindhand with his payments. The aim is to let him sink into debt, not so deeply as to imperil the security the trader has, but deeply enough to make it difficult or impossible for the customer to quickly extricate himself. In fact the idea is to have tied customers—men who must

buy where they already owe money, who are not in a position to quarrel with prices or the quality of the goods supplied. When the trader has double functions as middleman, not only supplying requirements but accepting produce, the system is one of the most effective means of fleecing the farmer at both ends of his business which could be devised. A large number of rural traders not only sell to their customers but also buy cattle, swine, butter, eggs, oats, potatoes, and other forms of farm produce from them. Barter takes the place of cash transactions. In congested districts this system is responsible for half of the poverty. I made minute enquiries in Connemara a few years ago. I compared the prices charged there with the prices charged for goods of the same quality in Galway town. I found out what allowances in goods were made for produce bartered, and came to the conclusion that for every shilling's worth of produce the small congested farmer had to dispose of he received less than half its value. In the maps of ancient Ireland we see pictures of famous chiefs standing over their territories—MacSwineys of the Battle Axes and their peers. In maps of modern congested Ireland pictured in the same way we should find swollen gombeen men straddling right across whole parishes, sucking up like a sponge all the wealth in the district, ruling everything, presiding over county councils, rural councils, boards of guardians, and placing their relatives in every position which their public functions allow them to interfere with. In congested Ireland every job which can be filled by the kith and kin of the gombeen kings and queens is filled accordingly, and you get every kind of inefficiency and jobbery. They are all publicans, and their friends are all strong drinkers. They beget people of their own character and appoint them lieutenants and

non-commissioned officers in their service. All the local appointments are in their gift, and hence you get drunken doctors, drunken rate-collectors, drunken J.P.'s, drunken inspectors—in fact round the gombeen system reels the whole drunken congested world, and underneath this revelry and jobbery the unfortunate peasant labours and gets no return for his labour. Another enters in and takes his cattle, his eggs, his oats, his potatoes, his pigs, and gives what he will for them, and the peasant toils on from year to year, being doled out Indian meal, flour, tea, and sugar enough to keep him alive. He is a slave almost as much as if he were an indentured native, or had been sold in the slave market. There is probably not a community in Europe so backward and wretched as this Connemara peasantry. There is not a redeeming feature. There is beauty of earth, mountain, sky and water, but no beauty in life. In Poland, Russia, Roumania, in any of the wretched peasant communities one hears of, there is still some refinement. You will see beautiful embroidery on the dresses, and picturesque houses. Life is not so hard that it has not left men and women some delight in beauty. But in poor Connemara the arts of life simply do not exist, and it maddens one to think that man the immortal, with all his God-implanted powers, should exist in such wretchedness, and know of no more expanded life than is allowed him by the gombeen kings for whom he labours and works unceasingly. It is hardly worth while being born in Connemara while this system continues. It is the distant and desert verge of humanity far beyond the borders of civilization.

CHAPTER III

NEED FOR AN AGRICULTURAL REVOLUTION

When steam first began to puff and wheels go round at so many revolutions per minute, the wild child humanity, who had hitherto developed his civilization in picturesque unconsciousness of where he was going, and without any set plan, was caught and put in harness. What are called business habits were invented to make the life of man run in harmony with the steam engine, and his movements rival the train in punctuality. The factory system was invented and was an instantaneous success. Men were clothed with cheapness and uniformity. Their minds grew numerously alike, cheap and uniform also. They were at their desks at nine o'clock, or at their looms at six. They adjusted themselves to the punctual wheels. The rapid piston acted as pacemaker, and in England, which started first on the modern race for wealth, it was an enormous advantage to have tireless machines of superhuman activity to make the pace, and nerve men, women, and children to the fullest activity possible. Business methods had a long start in England, and irregularity and want of uniformity became after a while such exceptions that they were regarded as deadly sins. The grocer whose supplies of butter did not arrive week after week by the same train, at the same hour, and of the same quality, of the same colour, the same saltiness, and in the same kind of box quarrelled with the wholesaler, who in

his turn quarrelled with the producer. Only the most machine-like race could win custom. After a while every country felt it had to be drilled or become extinct. Some made themselves into machines to enter the English market, some to preserve their own markets. Even the indolent Oriental is getting keyed up, and in another fifty years the Bedouin of the desert will be at his desk and the wild horseman of Tartary will be oiling his engines.

In Ireland the wild child humanity came under this discipline very slowly. He was in love with old fashions. For a long time he would have no butter made except in strict accordance with Gaelic traditions. He skimmed his milk himself, or his wife did, and he or she pounded away at the churn and were unconcerned about temperatures, and they had never heard of microbes. There was nothing uniform about the produce, and in a hundred farms in every parish a hundred flavours originated. They might be all bad, or all good, but they certainly were never the same. Yet the Irish farmer was manufacturing it for people who had standardized all their tastes and objected to the slightest change, who wanted their butter to be as uniform as all the square yards in a roll of wallpaper. The exceptional excellence of the butter received one week was no compensation for the intolerable flavour of the next. Denmark, twenty years before we began, turned itself into a machine, and its farmers all got up at the same time in the morning and took their milk to creameries, and cream was separated and churned at the same temperatures. The managers had heard all about bacteria, and that a microbe became a great grandfather in the winking of an eye, and they kept their premises as clean as the wards of a hospital, and they turned out butter so uniform that all the Danish butter might almost have come from the one

churning. The individualist in butter-making was nowhere. The uniform Briton with uniform tastes revolted against the eccentric variations in the flavour of butter coming from Ireland, and he paid the Irish middleman or the wholesaler twenty shillings a hundredweight under the price he paid to the disciplined Dane. The wholesaler acquiesced, he could do nothing else, but he saw to it that he did not lose, and he docked the price to the producer in Ireland, unloading his burden on the unorganized after the fashion of the most powerful. There is always room on top for more wealth and room at the bottom for more poverty. Bed rock has never been found, but the organized interests are always making the unorganized conduct extensive investigations in that direction. The sweated pursue these investigations towards bed rock in the cities, the small farmer in the country. The young Irish boy and girl growing up felt the occupation depressing and went to America. They had no interest in inquiry into economic ultimates.

The poultry and egg industry suffered in the same way. There were numerous relays of middlemen. The higgler went around generally with tea and sugar, and sometimes, though more rarely, with cash, and collected the eggs. Generally speaking, the farmer's wife kept them as long as she could, waiting for a rise in price. The higgler was not indifferent to the satisfaction of selling when prices were higher, and he waited so long as he thought it was prudent, and sold to the wholesaler in England, who received grievous complaints from the retailer about the freshness of the eggs and the way they were packed. Irish eggs grew to have a very bad name, which has only lately been somewhat refurbished. A great deal of the collection of eggs was, and still is, carried on by country shopkeepers. Eggs were bartered for

ounces of tea or pounds of sugar, and the egg grew to be regarded in many districts as part of the currency of the realm. I have myself seen a child enter a post office, lay down two eggs and ask for a penny stamp. There was little or no grading, the packing was disgraceful, the eggs were dirty, and their freshness was too often dubious. So here, as with the butter industry, the retailer in England found his sense of what was right and reliable and uniform shocked, and he paid for the cases as one who expected to find a considerable number of the eggs of election quality. In this business the Danes had also developed a machine-like accuracy, and though further removed from the common market, they managed to get their eggs there much fresher than we did. The Irish producer suffered. The national machinery for distribution of produce was old and out of date. It moved too slowly for a swift and methodical world. So in these two important branches of the farmer's business he did badly. He produced badly and without method. The marketing was inefficient, and as there is always room at the bottom and nothing to lean up against, the person nearest the market, which was firm and would not yield, naturally pushed the producer a little further into the abyss, where there was lots of room. It must be confessed that every country gets the kind of middlemen it deserves, and the way the Irish farmer managed his side of the business invited the kind of treatment he received. If he had sold through his own agents he would very speedily have found what the requirements of the market were, and would have adapted himself to them. But half a dozen middlemen, as links between the producer and the consumer, made a bad medium for conveying this kind of information, and the Irish farmer struggled on for years suffering

from forces too remote from him for his understanding.

In the marketing of live stock there was the same slackness. The fairs were, and are still, dominated by rings of dealers, jobbers, "blockers," and "tanglers," whose aim it is to buy as cheaply as possible. The blockers and tanglers are the jackals of the jobbers, and the jobbers are the jackals of the big dealers. Irish country people love the excitement, noise and tumult of a fair. One of our last poets sings of it with exultation :

"The crowds at the fair,
The herds loosened and blind,
Loud words and dark faces
And the wild blood behind."

Why, poet, this was a business assembly. Were you aware that these men were wrecking their industry by these loose business methods which delighted your eye? We shall have to keep the poets out of the new Irish Republic as Plato kept them out of his, or we shall never get our machine to work. The machine, I grant, may never be so picturesque, but the farmer of the future will compensate himself for the lack of excitement at the fair by a greater comfort in his home, and the poets must sing of other things. There will always be love, twilight and the stars.

Irish cattle and swine get to their final destination by devious routes. The first act in the business is to get the animals out of the farmer's hands as cheaply as possible, and for this purpose blockers and tanglers exist. They have no money themselves. They are simply the jackals of the jobbers. When a jobber has made his offer for some cattle which he wishes to buy, and it has been refused, it is the business of the blockers to remain beside the farmer

and to block other customers. The etiquette of the fair precludes rival bidding while a man is engaged in bargaining, so the blocker keeps other jobbers off until the first bidder returns and finds a weary and repentant farmer reduced to submission. His rent is due, or his instalment to the Land Commission, and he must sell. The tangler is a variety of the blocker. It is his business to confuse the farmer's mind as to the real value of his animal. The jobber offers, say, ten pounds, and it is refused. He winks at his jackals, and one tangler comes up and laughs at the farmer's price of twelve pounds, and offers eight pounds as all the beast is worth. Tangler succeeds tangler, and in the end the unfortunate man thinks he must be deceived as to the merits of his animal, and is glad to sell, perhaps for nine pounds, to the first bidder who returns at the close of the fair. These jackals often make as much as one pound or two pounds for their day's work. Another way in which the farmer suffers is that cattle are generally sold by guess-work, not by weight, and in calculating value by guess-work the expert beats the farmer. The jobber sells in turn to the big dealers, who sell again in England, and all these earnings and profits of blockers, tanglers, jobbers, and dealers are taken off the value of the farmer's stock. Horses are dealt with in much the same way. Sometimes if there is a brisk demand there is real competition, and cattle and horses may be sold for their real value, but, generally speaking, the market is laid out. Pig jobbers regularly lay out the market and fix prices, and while the farmer knows he is being fleeced he has no remedy. In Ulster, where pigs are killed before the fair, they must be sold somehow. "The dead must be buried," as their saying is, and elsewhere where they are sold alive the farmer hesitates to take the

animals back and be at the expense of further feeding, when he is not sure that the next fair will not see the same gang at work and perhaps with a lower price fixed.

Flax sales are dominated in the same way. The buyers form a ring in the morning and fiat their ultimatums. Corn and barley are sold by sample, and the producer is nearly always being fleeced on the excuse that bulk is not equal to sample. If prices go up he may be paid in full, but if they go down it is generally found that the sample was very misleading.

Only the merest sketch can be given of the antiquated methods of marketing which some few years ago prevailed all over Ireland, and which in some branches of the farmer's business still prevail. There are complications and intricacies which would need volumes to elucidate. But while I cannot expect the middlemen to recognise the truth of what I have written, the farmer will verify it; and the fact that these conditions existed, and still exist, is the motive power behind a revolution in business methods which is going on in Ireland (which I will describe in other chapters), and which has for its object the giving to the farmer the complete control of production and marketing, and the elimination of those middle interests which have acted with such disastrous results on Irish agriculture. These middlemen did not serve the farmers well. They tricked him at home, and could not even secure good prices themselves in the markets where they disposed of Irish produce. Even this year the Department of Agriculture found that sixty per cent. of the seeds sold in Ireland were adulterated. To put it briefly, agriculture as a business has been a house divided against itself. The directors were pocketing the profits as fees, and the shareholders got decreasing dividends. I have no enmity

to these people at all, but they are an anachronism in the modern world where industry is drilled and disciplined. I have made these brief sketches of their methods because I want to show how impossible it is for the unorganized small farmer to retain any fair proportion of the wealth he creates while forces which he cannot control take possession of his industry and exploit it. Dual control in agricultural industry is as impossible to maintain or defend as dual ownership of land. I wish to show how impossible it is to build up a rural civilization while these loose and wasteful business methods prevail. While this goes on stagnation or decadence must continue. The farmer will economise more in labour, he will revert to the cheapest and lowest forms of farming, and labour will desert the country. The young people as they grow up will fly from a life which offers them nothing—no joy, no beauty, no comfort, no hope. Have we not all seen the growing dislike of the land among the rising generation? How many Irishmen go on the land in the States? Not one in twenty, not in a hundred—hardly one in a thousand. They have been on the land in Ireland, and they go anywhere—to any crowded slum—rather than to the fields. God's world—all the light, the glory, the beauty which the earth puts forth to her children—the dawn over the hills, the green grass, the odour and incense of flowers, the smell of the turned-up sod, trees, hills, the multitudinous magnificence of nature—are all being deserted by humanity because humanity cannot exist on the earth and cultivate it, and maintain thereon an equal life. If they remain they are poor, they are ignorant, they are beset by hostile forces, they are enslaved, and they give up their inheritance as heirs of the ages and the spoils which man has ransacked from time. We cry out with Whitman: "Could we wish

humanity indifferent? Could we wish people were made of wood or stone?" The system which has acted so disastrously to Irish agriculture must be changed, and its agents must disappear. We need not pity them. A revolution cannot be wrought at once. They will slowly melt into the new order which will slowly arise, and they will find their place there. The Irish rural community of the future, I hope, will find a place for all its people.

CHAPTER IV

THE RISE OF AGRICULTURAL CO-OPERATION

This is only a guide to the next generation, and no one need expect from me proposals for a new Utopia to be floated at once with a promise of huge dividends of happiness. I do not believe in the designs of those who say they are building for eternity, as experience has shown that most of these cuttings from flowers in the mind shrivel at their first transplanting into time. No country can marry any particular solution of its problems and live happily ever afterwards. Life is an endless struggle, and every nation will have perpetually to adjust itself to new conditions. Protection may triumph this generation on earth, but I foresee in the next generation free trade victoriously appearing in the heavens and renewing the attack with airships. I have friends who are socialists, and they firmly believe if the world only married their particular solution of its problems it would—it must—live happily ever after. But I mistrust them because they are so logical and unanswerable. They are always telling me that two and two make four, whereas I have a deep-rooted conviction that a happier assortment of figures might bring about a more pleasing result. Like the poet who formed out of three sounds, not a fourth sound, but a star, I would like to shift things about more loosely in hopes of a sudden star emerging out of human chemicals mixed in less equal proportions than my socialist friends contemplate in their

formula. I know socialism would be the logical solution of all difficulties if humanity was just emerging from Eden, but there is no use talking about it in Ireland. When the State decided on turning tenants into proprietors it set up a barrier against socialism which will last, I fancy, for a couple of hundred years yet. An Irish farmer would pour down boiling lead on the emissaries of the State who tried to nationalise his land, the land he sweated sixty years to pay for. There is no fear of socialism in Ireland. There are other and real dangers. There is the danger that without a complete reorganization of business methods in rural Ireland it will slip back gradually into the old order with a new class of landlords. There is the fear that Michael Mulligan, gombeen man, and his class will begin gradually to absorb the farms of their tied customers and create a new aristocracy. Indeed they are doing this already. The old aristocracies swaggered royally to the devil. They borrowed money at sixty per cent. and ruined themselves. The new aristocracy, whose coming I dread, have been accustomed to lend money at sixty per cent. and to ruin others. I prefer the former type, though I hope no one will accuse me of unduly exalting it. I believe the alternative habit is the more dangerous of the two, and is less easily got rid of as a family tradition. We are passing by Scylla, and I wish to point the way past Charybdis. We want a raft which can be constructed in one generation, and which will be able to float the next past our pressing dangers into the open sea of the future. We need not with the Utopians take thought of what the next generation will eat or what it will wear. The unborn may very well be trusted to look after and feed their unborn.

The second danger, I fear, is that without State socialism we may yet get worship of the State, and

belief in its powers, developed to such an extent that the community will place itself completely in the hands of the government to the utter destruction of self-reliance, initiative, and independence of spirit. When a man becomes imbecile his friends place him in an asylum. When a people grow decadent and imbecile they place themselves in the hands of the State. That is a real danger in Ireland. "But you are talking nonsense," many readers will say. "Ireland is, and always will be, against the government." Ah! There is no eternity about these popular emotions. Ireland *was* against the government, and hated it so heartily that it brought around a psychological change which occurs in races as much as in individuals. If an individual, ignoring the wise warning of the Gospels, condemns any one over much, what he condemns is meted out to him. If he says some one is very vain, vanity blooms all over him as he speaks, for the remark implies that the speaker believes he is stainless so far as this fault is concerned. If he says some one else is a most irritable person, he grows irritated himself, and so on through the whole range of emotions. Any philosopher who studied Irish problems calmly, if such a thing were possible, and seeing the intense hatred of the Irish of any government they had to deal with, could have prophesied they were bringing upon themselves the fate of being the most governed people on the face of the earth. Already one in every forty persons in Ireland is in the employment of the State, and the demand for more government departments is increasing with feverish intensity. Within only the last couple of years demands have been made for a department with a million a year to develop industries. Forestry eagerly claimed a department all to itself. Next, the railways were to be bought by the State and departmentalized also.

Another demand was for State banking, and the income of the already existing departments has never been sufficient to satisfy either the departments or the people. They always ought to be doubled. The State is rapidly becoming a kind of fetish in Ireland, a fetish which is kicked and prayed to alternately, the kicking testifying to as much belief as the prayers. We complain quite justly that we are the most expensively governed people in Europe, and we go on asking for more expensive government departments. If we got all the things we ask for those who asked for them would instantly count up the cost, add it to that of already existing departments to prove still more conclusively that the solar system could not possibly contain a more expensively governed race, and this would be put forward as a new reason why still more departments should be founded to balance or redress the wrong.

Any one who has the misfortune I have of being forced every week to read a great number of country papers will bear me out when I say that nothing is more common than the demand in every parish meeting, board of guardians, rural or urban council, for State aid or State subsidies in some form or other. It is the tragedy of the decline and fall of the human will in the people we are witnessing, a far worse tragedy than the emigration which is deplored so much. The will is growing powerless to act without partnership with its fetish or idol the State.

It all arose from the country keeping its eyes fixed on Westminster, on those distant political hills from which all aid was to come. Ireland has been for many years in the position of a man whose lawyers have been long conducting a suit for the recovery of some property which, they assure him, will speedily become his, and who, trusting in these

promises, lives on his expectations, does nothing to help himself, and at last becomes so poor that he cannot afford even to pay his lawyers. It would have been a demoralizing position for an individual. It was disastrous for the country. Ireland has grown to have so little power of self-help that it cannot even pay its own advocates. We have two great parties. One has been kept in place by force of foreign arms. The other has been kept in power by force of foreign dollars. Every eye was fixed on Westminster, with the natural consequence that the powers and possibilities of the State assumed monstrous and unnatural proportions in men's minds, and what a man or country could do for itself without State aid dwindled to insignificance. The country seems to have acted in the spirit of a drunken Belfast workman whom a friend of mine heard shouting, "A won't do a han's turn till Ireland's free!"

When we were not appealing to the British Government we were not idle with our prayers in other quarters. We were the most appealing nation on the face of the earth. We appealed to God, humanity, Europe, the United States, the Colonies, for pity, for sympathy, for dollars. We warned America that if she did not come to our rescue our national aspirations would die out and the responsibility would be on her shoulders. One felt ashamed of the name of Irishman in the midst of all these tearful supplications. I received a letter once from an American friend who expressed a view which grows more and more popular in his country. "Can't the Irish people do something except beg? Can they do nothing for themselves? Can't they dig or do something? Their policy isn't manly, and when I think of Joan of Arc I feel it isn't even womanly."

All these appeals to the State would not have done so much harm if the mouthpieces of popular sentiment had not felt it incumbent on them to discourage any non-political efforts to promote prosperity. These were described as "drawing a red herring across the track." If self-help had been fostered as industriously as State aid we might have arrived at something. But politicians would not admit that it was either possible or desirable that Ireland should help itself until what they wanted done was done first. Irish misery and poverty were valuable assets in the campaign. The net result in the psychology of the Irish people was that they grew less and less self-reliant. The State treated Ireland as the great big incapable baby it was represented to be. The country became like a gigantic crèche with a whole army of officials guiding, controlling, or spoon-feeding it. Ireland, in spite of professed hatred of the State, has never been nearer to complete dependence on it than at the present moment.

While this Westminsterism was rampant, internal social reforms such as other nations carry out for themselves seemed to have no chance. Fifteen years ago all the economic wastefulness and inefficiency I have described in previous chapters was at its height. The farmer's pocket was being picked while he listened to his favourite orator, who informed him the landlord was the only real culprit. But he felt that the explanation did not cover everything, and all the elements which make for a complete reorganization of rural society were in solution waiting to be crystallized, and they began to take form. A scientific friend tells me that crystallization only takes place when a pure atom of the crystal to be formed falls into the bath. All the atoms of that element in solution then begin to gather about it. I

am not a scientist and cannot guarantee the truth of this, but it provides me with an excellent illustration, and I feel sure it is accurate because it is true that to create a human crystal or co-operative organization, a man with the true spirit of mutuality must first fall into the society to be organized. This happened in Ireland when Horace Plunkett returned from America in 1889. Nature had prepared him for the work he was to undertake by gifting him with every kind of insidious power to drag people out of their own private and proper work and make them do his work instead. The apostles did not seem by their previous professions more unsuitable to turn into divines than the people Horace Plunkett collected and filled with his own spirit and sent out to organize the farmers. Artists, poets, literary men and clergymen fell victims to him equally with those who were personally interested in farming. Every extreme of political belief was represented in his circle. Orangeman met Fenian, the Church of Ireland clergyman met the Catholic priest. The Ulster Unionist found himself to his astonishment discussing Irish economics with Munster Nationalists. Sir Horace Plunkett wanted to keep his work non-political. He had not at that time realized that to the political powers in Ireland the most poisonous character enmity to them could assume was to be non-political. He has since learned that lesson thoroughly. Really sincere believers in the power of the State to make people prosperous either by Acts of Parliament or by stopping other people from passing such Acts, looked on him with disgust, for he was the beginning of the reaction from patriotism by proxy. He was the spirit of Sinn Féin casting a rather misleading shadow before it, because such politics as he professed were vaguely Unionist. They were a great deal too vague for many of his

Unionist friends, as he found when he began to break down a portion of the Chinese walls between parties, and the mandarins on one side of the walls and the chiefs of the wild hordes on the other side made frequent and pointed remonstrances. But I am not concerned with his politics, which I leave to his biographer, hoping one will not be required for many years yet.

He was something better than a politician. He was a statesman with a creative mind. He saw rural Ireland completely disorganized, the population melting away, Irish produce badly marketed, prices falling every year, and science unknown on the farm. In fact, while the country was fighting for the raw material of prosperity—that is, for the land—the production, manufacture and business connected with it, where profit or loss mainly arise, was completely neglected. He did not underrate the one great and notable achievement of Parliamentarianism, its services to Ireland in bringing about a transfer of land from proprietor to tenant, but he saw that this, however important as a first step, was not finally most important. The moral advantages of proprietorship were great, but the financial advantages to be gained by the transfer were incomparably less than the advantages to be reaped by better farming and better marketing. These finally were most important; and while the Parliamentarian fought for the land, Sir Horace Plunkett set himself to solve the problem of how to keep a prosperous community on the land which the State had made up its mind should be transferred from landlord to tenant. It was natural enough, while the leaders of the people in the land war were trying to drive hard bargains for the land, they should view with intense dislike any effort to increase production or profit at the same time. They thought rents and prices

would rise along with profits. They were wrong, as events proved. Rents steadily fell. The Government which was to finance the transfer was not going to allow any of its agencies to increase values and its own future financial liabilities. But this was the beginning of an enmity which has lasted up to the present date. The country wisely tried to get what it could from both. It has nearly done with land purchase. It will have done with it in a few more years. We are here in sight of the end. But the new movement for the organization of agriculture opens up infinitely more interesting and complex vistas. It is not the work which is done which excites enthusiasm, but the work which is yet to be done—the long vistas and the yet unfolded close. It is not what the State has done or can do which inspires, but the infinitely nobler possibilities which arise through the voluntary co-operation of men to wring from nature and life the utmost they can give. There are unsuspected possibilities in agricultural organization—beginnings which I believe will finally evolve into splendid consummations. But to show clearly what it is I hope for, I will give some account of the true significance of a movement which is little understood for all its notoriety, and for all the political warfare which has raged about it.

CHAPTER V

BUILDING UP A NEW SOCIAL ORDER

The true significance of the movement promoted by Sir Horace Plunkett is that it is an attempt to build up a new social order in Ireland. A social order of some kind we must have in rural districts, which will bring men into mutually beneficial relations with each other, which will create or draw out the highest economic, political and human qualities in the people, and remind them daily that they are units of a society from which they receive benefits, and to which their loyalty and affection will naturally flow. A man is not human in the true sense of the word unless he fits into humanity. A disorganized society is like a heap of bricks. Bricks may be made, but there is no reason for their existence unless they are to form part of a building. A social order in rural districts may take on a great many forms. Every organization makes its own demands on its units; they get accustomed to it, and character is shaped accordingly. You may have the feudal system, which prevailed in England for so long, where the owner of broad acres was the head of his district. It was his hereditary duty to look after the welfare of his tenants, and they in their turn appealed to him in their troubles; they voted for him and gave him political power. The feudal system at its best produced good results owing to

mutual support. *Noblesse oblige* was not without meaning in England. Another kind of social order existed for long periods in Russia, where land was placed at the disposal of the village communities. The council of the Mir decided periodically about its allotment among the members of the commune in proportion to their families and needs. They grew to recognise no claim to land except that based on the power of the man and his family to work it; and this system generated its own peculiar social virtues and ideas of justice, solidarity, and unselfishness. There is the co-operative system, as we find it in Germany, with associations based on mutual liability, where mutual trust is engendered based on long experience of each other's character. We have testimony from many observers to the splendid character created among members of European communes. Wherever there is mutual aid, wherever there is constant give and take, wherever the prosperity of the individual depends directly and obviously on the prosperity of the community about him, there the social order tends to produce fine types of character, with a devotion to public ideas; and this is the real object of all government. The forms which a social order may take are many. The best is that which produces the finest type of human being, with the social or kindly instincts most strongly developed. The worst thing which can happen to a social community is to have no social order at all, where every man is for himself and the devil may take the hindmost. Generally in such a community he takes the front rank as well as the stragglers. The phrase, "Every man for himself," is one of the maxims in the gospel according to Beelzebub. The devil's game with men is to divide and conquer them. Isolate your man from obligations to a social order and in

most cases his soul drops into the pit like a rotten apple from the Tree of Life. Fine character in a race is evolved and not taught. It is not due to copy-book headings or moral maxims given to the youth of the country. It arises from the structure of society and the appeal it makes to them. One man in every hundred is a freak, a person lit up by a lamp from within. He may be a poet, an artist, a saint, a social reformer, a musician, a politician, a person who has found the law of his own being and acts and wills from his own centre. As for the other ninety-nine, they are just what the social order makes them. They would, for the most part, prefer to do what is right, but if it is difficult they will agree to the wrong. Let one trader in a street adulterate his goods and sell them cheap and get customers. If unchecked, in five years' time half the traders in his neighbourhood will be adulterating what they sell in order to compete and live. An experimental test of honesty was made in Glasgow a couple of years ago by a man who went straight down the streets and bought butter at every shop. Of fifty-two samples only two were unadulterated. All the vendors were normal beings simply acting as their neighbours acted. The social virtues are built up by a social order. With no fine organization of society the ninety and nine odd persons who have no inner light fall into the pit.

We have not had a social order in Ireland since the time of the clans. Our ancient aristocracies won their positions by the sword. They drew the sword on behalf of their clansmen, and the clansmen laboured for the chiefs. The aristocracy which succeeded them drew their rents on their own behalf, and soon found nobody to support them in Ireland. The chiefs of the old clans won the right to live on their clansmen by their readiness to die

for their clansmen, and the passionate loyalty of the clansmen to their chiefs is recorded in many a song and story. Our last aristocracy, for the most part, could not bear the sight of their tenants, and their tenants shot at them through the hedges when they got the chance. Ireland has gained nothing in national character by the farce of a feudal system which existed during the last century. The movement I am writing about is an attempt to build up a true social order.

A social order should provide for three things—for economic development, for political stability, and a desirable social life. I will try to show how the co-operative movement provides for these things, which are truly our most pressing national necessities. I have already given some account of the disabilities unorganized farmers suffered from in the profitable pursuit of their industry, how the agricultural interest became, like a paralytic with no control over his limbs, unable to act powerfully on its own behalf. I am not going to give any minute description of the various kinds of rural associations promoted by the Irish Agricultural Organization Society. Nearly everybody is by this time more or less familiar with the work of creameries, agricultural, poultry, flax, home industry, and credit societies. The dairy societies have released the farmer from the bondage to the butter merchant and proprietor, and given back to him the control of the processes of manufacture and sale. In the credit societies farmers join together, and, creating by their union a greater security than any of them could offer individually, they are able to get money to finance their farming operations at very low rates. The joint stock banks lend money to these societies on wholesale terms, letting them retail it again among their members. Generally speaking, it has been

found possible to borrow money at from three to four per cent. and to lend it for productive purposes at the popular rate of one penny a month for every pound employed. The trust auctioneer's methods, the gombeen man's methods, cannot stand this competition. The poultry societies collect the eggs of their members, they grade and pack them properly, and market them through their own agencies. The flax societies erect or hire scutch mills and see that the important work of scutching the flax is performed with the requisite care. The agricultural societies purchase seeds, implements, fertilisers, feeding stuffs, and agricultural requirements for their members. Many of them hold thousands of pounds worth of machinery too expensive for the individual farmer to buy. The societies buy their requirements at wholesale prices and insure good quality. The home industries' societies have made hopeful beginnings with lace, crochet, embroidery, and rug-making to provide work for country girls. About one hundred thousand Irish country people are already members of co-operative societies, and their trade turn-over this year will be close on three million pounds. The total trade turn-over of the movement, from its inception to the present, is over twenty-five million pounds. I mention these figures because the modern mind is indisposed to attach much importance to social reforms where their importance cannot be instantly translated into an equivalent in the universally intelligible language of money. Now, what is really most interesting in the character of the Irish co-operative movement is not that its promoters have started associations like those I have mentioned. All over Europe similiar associations have been in existence for many years. What is really interesting is the way in which the Irish social reformers are

developing and adapting to Irish needs methods of combination which have long been familiar to Continental farmers. The societies in Ireland are losing their specialised character, their limitation of objects to this purpose or that, and are more and more assuming a character which can only be described by calling them general purposes' societies. The successful dairy society begins to take up the work of an agricultural, poultry, or credit society in addition to the work for which the farmers were originally organized in the district. It is gradually absorbing into one large well-managed association all the rural business connected with agriculture in each parish. The societies are controlled by committees elected by the members, and in a decade or so, instead of the dislocation and separation of interests which has been so disastrous in its effects, instead of innumerable petty businesses all striving for their own rather than the general welfare, there will be in each parish one large association able to pay well for expert management, with complete control over all processes of purchase, manufacture and sale, and run by the farmers with the energy of self-interest. These district associations are rapidly linking themselves on to large federations for purchase and sale, which again are controlled by representatives of the societies, and through these the farmers are able to act powerfully in the market. They become their own middlemen. All the links between production on the farm and sale to the consumer are getting connected into one system, and that controlled by the agriculturist. These societies, their federations, and the I.A.O.S. form the nucleus, and a very strong nucleus, for a vast farmers' trade union, ready to protect their interests, to help them socially, politically and economically. This formation of a farmers' trade union has become

absolutely necessary in modern times. Every industry is organized—engineers, bricklayers, carpenters, dock hands, masons, boilermakers—all have their trade unions. Run through all the trades; for every one of them there is a trade union, and we all know what they have done for the workers. The distributive stores in the towns are trade unions of consumers, which protect them against middlemen, and sometimes against manufacturers. The trade unions look after the interests of their members, and all these bodies, as they grow strong and insist powerfully on their own rights, have a natural tendency to squeeze the unorganized, and relegate them to the ranks of the sweated. It has been the action of some of these powerfully organized bodies which has had much to say to the decay of agriculture. The workers in the towns clamoured for cheap food. Let it come from anywhere, they must be fed. The manufacturers backed them up because they knew there were two alternatives to be faced. The purchasing power of money, its capacity to buy bread and meat, had to be increased, or else wages had to be raised and profits eaten into. They preferred to increase the purchasing power of money, and all the business skill and organizing power of Great Britain was used to flood the market with corn and beef, with fruit, and farm and dairy produce. It mattered not at all to them that, in the face of this competition, agriculture rotted away outside their own cities, and that the farmers in distant countries broke up more virgin soil, while at their own doors the land went back to nature, and the all-conquering grass crept up with its battalions of thin green spears to the very outskirts of the towns. It was immediately easier to invite the world to send its supplies of food than it was to develop the natural prodigious food-producing capacity of the fields about them. The farmers were

unorganized. They had no trade union, no powerful voice to plead in their behalf, and to-day the deer forests in Scotland, the game preserves in England, the deserts of grass in Ireland, are gigantic illustrations of the desolation and decay which falls on the industry when men work alone and are not united to protect their interests.

By the very nature of agriculture it needs this protection more than any other industry. It is the basic human occupation. Let it fail, and humanity must disappear, and the birds of the air and the beasts of the field war for the lordship of the planet. Our princes and captains of industry, and all they control, the high-built factories and titanic mills, might all disappear without man disappearing; but cut away man from the fields and fruits of the earth and in six months there will be silence in the streets, and in half a century the forests will be butting at London and leaning their shoulders against the houses to overwhelm them. Agriculture separates its workers, while the factories and mills bring their workers together. Because of this isolation of the workers in the field, because each man has his plot of earth to till, and because he is made more or less solitary, there is all the more need for organization. Legislatures work their will and enact their laws, and these become part of the social order, and have the army and police to put them in force long before the farmer has heard of the law, long before he can make any protest. Markets are occupied and the ways to them blocked before the unorganized farmer can take action. He is squeezed out perpetually by the acute business man, and made more and more a hewer of wood and a drawer of water. The tendency of this oppression is to take the higher, more intellectual, and more profitable departments of agricultural production out of the farmer's hands

and reduce him to the position of a manual labourer.

It is the natural rebellion of farmers against such a destiny which has brought about their organization over Europe and their fierce battles with trusts in America. But these associations, while primarily called into being by the necessity of self-defence, have higher aims, and the creators of these associations all the world over have ever mingled the idea of protection with splendid dreams of the building up of a rural civilization. They soon realised that with the union of men to help each other came the promise and potency of a progress inconceivable before; that with more economic business methods, with cheapness in purchase, combination in sale, with science in the farm and dairy, with expensive machinery co-operatively owned, and with the complete control of their own industry—farmers could create and retain a communal wealth which could purchase for them the comforts and some of the luxuries of civilization. It is no unrealisable dream, but a perfectly practical programme, which offers farmers, as the result of organization and loyal co-operation with each other, not only political power and economic prosperity, but also a more intellectual and enjoyable social life. We will yet see the electric light and the telephone in rural districts, and the village hall with a pleasant hum of friendship in it. Ireland, while it is a late comer among the nations into the field, has already developed the most complete programme. The promoters of the co-operative movement here have thought out a whole system, have made an imaginative co-ordination of isolated methods of organization, and, profiting by the experience of Europe, are beginning their ideals where their pioneers concluded theirs. We had greater need in Ireland to think intensely and passionately

on these subjects, because the Continental nations never neglected agriculture nor treated it with the scornful contempt and neglect of the English-speaking peoples. We were lucky, too, in Ireland in having a statesman to guide us in our work, a man who could think round his problem, see three sides to it—its length, its breadth, its thickness—who wanted better farming, better business, and better living in Ireland, and knew how all these might be obtained.

The opposition to this work of agricultural organization had its origin in the little country towns which, for the most part, produce nothing, and are mere social parasites. Of course there are country towns in Ireland which are manufacturing centres and justify their existence. We have our linen mills in Ulster, and here and there we come across towns which produce and create wealth and give employment. But we are forced to ask ourselves whether most of our Irish country towns really serve the country well? Do they create any social life for the surrounding rural districts other than that based on the facilities for a social glass? Do they attract people with any other lure than that one might indicate by saying—where there is a whiskey bottle in the centre, there half a dozen will gather about it? Our small Irish country towns, in their external characteristics, are so arid and unlovely that one longs for a lodge in some vast wilderness as a relief from the unbearable meanness. Better look out on boundless sand and boundless sky, on two immensities, than on these mean and straggling towns, those disreputable public houses, those uncleansed footways like miry manure yards. For if one has a soul and any love for beauty he must feel like an anarchist if he strays into an Irish country town, and must long for bombs to wreck and dynamite to

obliterate. If we examine into the internal economy of these excrescences on the face of nature, we find for the most part they are absolutely non-productive. They create no wealth, they generate no civic virtues, certainly they manifest none. They are mainly the channels through which porter and whiskey run from breweries and distilleries into the human stomach; and whatever trade there is is distributive only. There is no intellectual life in them. Hardly a country town has a book-shop. Here and there you will find a yellow assortment of ancient penny novelettes or song-books in a window, with the dead flies of yester year still unswept from the paper, or a row of sensational tales in gaudy colours, the sensational tales of twenty years ago, and a few sixpenny reprints. If this business of reading is to be catered for it ought to be done well. If we cannot give the best, we had much better have no reading at all. Better the ignorance of great literature—which left the Gaelic poets centuries ago to their own resources, their own traditions and folk tales, out of which came songs as natural and sweet as the songs of the birds—than these dust heaps of cheap prints, without high purpose, and glimmering all over with the phosphorescence of mental decay. Nearly every country in the world supplies its own literature except Ireland, whose appetite for reading Irish books would not supply one single literary man in Ireland with an income sufficient for him to live as comfortably as a sergeant of Constabulary. Towns ought to be conductors, catching the lightnings of the human mind and distributing them all around their area. The Irish country towns only develop mental bogs about them. We have grown so accustomed to these arid patches of humanity that we accept them in a hopeless kind of way, whereas we should rage and prophesy over them as the prophets

of ancient Israel did over Tyre and Sidon. And, indeed, a lordly magnificence of wickedness is not so hopeless a thing to contemplate as a dead level of petty iniquity, the soul's death in life, without ideas or aspirations. The Chaldeans—they who built up the Tower of Heaven in defiance of Heaven—had so much greatness of soul that the next thing they might do would be to turn it into a house of prayer; but lives filled with everlasting littleness fill one with deep despair and madness of heart. We want pioneers of civilization to go out into our country districts with a divine passion in them, the desire of the God-implanted spirit, to make the world about them into some likeness of the Kingdom of Light. There are no barriers in our way except ourselves and our own supineness. The men in any rural district, united together, could make the land they live in as lovely to look on as the fabled gardens in the valley of Damascus. They could have fruit trees along the hedgerows, and make the country roads beautiful with colour in spring. This has been done in many a rural commune on the Continent, and there is no reason why it should not be done here. Only let us get our men together, get them organized, and one improvement will rapidly follow another. For all great deeds by races, all civilizations, were built up by the voluntary efforts of men united together. Sometimes one feels as if there were some higher mind in humanity which could not act through individuals, but only through brotherhoods and groups of men. Anyhow, the civilization which is based on individualism is mean, and the civilization based upon great guilds, fraternities, communes and associations is of a higher order. If we are to have any rural civilization in Ireland it must spring out of co-operation.

I have shown, I hope clearly, within the limits of

the space at my disposal, how the organization of the farmers in societies and federations enables the will of the rural population to have free play with its own problems, as the will of a healthy man directs the motions of the body, and he is enabled to perform efficiently his work in the world. The co-operative movement is an organization of the rural interests to enable it to meet the organization of the urban interests; but, lest it should be supposed that this concentration of rural energies would adversely affect the towns, I will deal with this question later, and also show how agricultural organization provides a solution for many national problems which are a cause of deep anxiety to those whose interests in life are not exhausted by the solution of their personal problems, but who also think of the destinies of the nation to which they belong.

CHAPTER VI

TOWN AND COUNTRY

I have heard people speak as if the organization movement had decreed capital punishment to the country towns. The moderate mind has so little power nowadays that men support legislation and movements as if to win meant the winning of the earthly Paradise at once, and defeat meant instant lapsing back into the ape and tiger. So some angry townsmen hear of the spread of co-operation among the farmers as if they were hearing of the march of armed barbarians on their city. But it is easy to show that the organization of the farmers will not injuriously affect urban life in Ireland, and that country towns will not disappear. They will dwindle here and emerge there, and will adjust themselves to the new conditions, and will prosper on the whole. No human institutions are permanent. Babylon and Nineveh are heaps of ruins, and Tyre and Sidon are buried deep out of sight. They were centres of a little swirl of things in their time, and the caravans met there, and the dark-skinned merchants unrolled their bales in their markets. They were prophesied against because they did not fulfil the law, and they are only memories. I have prophesied against many Irish country towns for this sin in them, *that they do not produce*. As a man who creates nothing sinks into poverty and oblivion, so the town which creates no wealth only exists as a burden on the community, and it is bound to disappear. It may have its uses

for a time as a centre of distribution, but if this work can be better done otherwise it has no claims, economic or social, on the community, and it must vanish, and the country will be the richer for its vanishing and will lose nothing, for the productive industries will gain and the population engaged in productive work will increase. But the idea that agricultural co-operation carried to its uttermost would destroy urban life in this country is a nightmare based on no economic fact. If we take Denmark, a typical co-operative country, with endless dairy and agricultural societies, bacon factories and rural stores, we find the towns are flourishing, and it is one of the few countries in the old world, perhaps the only one, which has not only retained but increased its rural population. A country must first of all safeguard its producers. It depends absolutely on them to create wealth, and they must be allowed to create it under the best possible conditions they can devise. I do not think it will seriously be disputed that the main concern of a nation should be for its productive classes. In the families of the poor the wage-earner has first of all to be kept in health. If he gets ill, then the family is lost. No matter how others in the family are pinched, the wage-earner must be maintained in sufficient health and strength to do his work. The family recognize this. The nation has yet to recognize it, or we should not have had such serious acceptance here for the last fifteen years of the complaints about the organization of the farmers affecting distributors injuriously, as if the interests of the wealth-producers were to be set aside and their progress hindered, and their operations limited to maintain undisturbed a class which produces nothing at all, not one solitary sixpence to add to the wealth of the nation. There are two kinds of towns, the town which exists because it is a centre of production,

and the town which exists because it is a centre of distribution. The first kind creates wealth, and its decay is a national loss. If new and more economic methods of distribution cause the town of distributors to decay it is a national gain. I do not see how any action or inaction on the part of farmers is to prevent the decay of such towns if they depend solely on their distributive trade. Anyhow some rows of licensed premises, with a few men spitting at the corners, do not constitute a civilization whose lapsing Ireland need lament over with too exquisite a pain. Agricultural co-operation helps the productive urban centres because, as a result of better rural production, there is more wealth in the country, more economic purchase and greater consumption. Whatever benefits production increases consumption. Our makers of artificial fertilizers will admit that farmers are better buyers of fertilizers since they cheapened the cost to themselves by co-operative purchase. The makers of dairy machinery, steam threshers and other expensive implements, have found a market among the organized farmers which they had not previously found among the unorganized. The society is a better and larger buyer than the individuals who compose it. Good production in the country stimulates production in the cities.

The farmers and manufacturers are the wealth-creators in a nation, and the system which most benefits these must be the best system. No Irish town where there is effective production will suffer by agricultural co-operation carried to its uttermost limits. It will gain by having a better market for what it produces. As for the towns which depend solely on distribution, I think they are bound to dwindle. We cannot stay the progress of a nation or stereotype present conditions simply to enable every

person engaged in distributive trade to preserve his present income. National progress is not so effected. If the country gains on the whole, and gains greatly, the new developments will absorb the workers in the dwindling centres. We need not lament over them. These non-productive country towns cannot hope to remain for ever as they are, any more than the ground where the Bedouins pitched their tents for a night can hope to have the hum of human life above it, and the tread of feet upon it for ever. Life is a flux, and commercial conditions never remain steadfast. Populations are always shifting, and change from centre to centre as the Indians who move from hunting-ground to hunting-ground. The world is like a pot of water which is quiet every now and then until somebody throws something into it and the water begins to effervesce. With the invention of railways and the cheapening of transport the old quiet has gone, the world has become like a boiling pot, and it is going to boil more and more, and not the remotest village can hope to escape the commotion. Everything is going to be melted down and cast into new shapes. There will always be plenty of opportunities for the enterprising commercial individualist to make money in a prosperous productive community. It is not the producers who should adapt themselves to the middle agencies, but the middle agencies to the needs of the producers. The most important factor in securing continued national prosperity is the power of adaptability among the productive classes. Hard and fast lines, restriction on trade methods, will soon make a country drop behind. The power to continuously adjust production to the needs of the market is one of the greatest advantages of association among farmers. If middlemen are to survive they must adjust themselves to the producers, and not try to make the continuance

of present conditions the dominating purpose in Irish rural politics.

It may be said we are hoping to substitute an agricultural ascendancy for the urban ascendancy; which dominates politics in these islands, that the organized farmers will increase the cost of living to the townsman, that food prices are already steadily rising, and will rise still more owing to the creation of an agricultural trust. It is true food prices are rising, and will rise still more; but the cause of this is due to the neglect of rural life and the concentration of wealth, intelligence, civilization and political power in the cities, with the natural result of a rural exodus. The country people have flocked to the centres of life. There are ever more and more people engaged in urban industries, and fewer in proportion in rural production. This is the main cause of the rise in food prices, and there will be no fall until the countryside is organized and the life there made sufficiently attractive for it to retain its population and restore the balance. I do not think there is any real danger of the farmer gaining an ascendancy; but even if there were, would it not be better for humanity than an urban ascendancy? Between a choice of terrors, between a ruined countryside and a hungry city, who would hesitate? I certainly would make my choice for the hungry city. When the city is hungry the farmer will produce, and nature will get some of her children back to her breast and will nourish them, and there will be a strong healthy population there. But if we declare for the ruined countryside, as England has done, the prosperity of the towns will be only momentary and life will rot away. England at present, owing to her neglected rural life, is like a woman exhausted by long child-bearing, and it can no longer send up

to the cities the stream of sturdy rustics who vitalized its industries for nigh a century. Its city populations grew more and more feeble, less dependent on themselves and more dependent on the State. I prophesy a rise in food prices, and, hard as it is, I see in this inevitable rise the chance for the prosperity of the countryside, and the tilling of the land, and the discomfiture of the grass, and the re-population of the wilderness, and the reflushing of the veins of humanity with the old divine vigour got from sun and air, and the smell of the earth and rural labour. Nature, or the powers who are guardians of humanity, never allow life to stray permanently or hopelessly from the natural order : and if men will not live the natural life, then with pestilence and famine in the cities they are scourged back, even as in the parable those who would not willingly come to the banquet were caught by an iron hand in the highways and forced to come in. The messengers are already departing on their mission, and those who are young to-day will see, before they are middle-aged, the way in which nature guides her children and keeps them from straying long in paths dangerous to life. Nature has no intention of allowing her divine brood, made in the image of Deity, to dwindle away into a crew of little, feeble, feverish city folk. She has other and more grandiose futures before humanity if ancient prophecy and our deepest, most spiritual, intuitions have any truth in them.

CHAPTER VII

ORGANIZED COMMUNITIES AND POLITICAL LIFE

I have already said that a social order ought to provide not only for economic development, but for political stability. One would have imagined that the advantages of an organized agriculture to the nation and its bearing on political life would have been obvious, but it is strange to find politicians still denouncing the co-operative movement as anti-national. It is hard to know what they mean by a nation. Our Irish politicians have attacked or held aloof from every non-political movement which showed signs of vitality. They have denounced the co-operative movement, held sulkily apart from the Gaelic revival, and the Industrial Development Associations owe nothing to them. Yet they profess to act and speak in the name of the nation. What is a nation? It is a single yet multitudinous being, giving evidences of unity and individual character by the power of growth from within which it manifests. Its people must show signs of individual life and the power of growth and movement. A race whose people do not manifest in infinite variety their power to take united action, to evolve their own ideals of society, culture, and industry, has no right to call itself a nation at all.

Now, the curious thing about Ireland, when one comes to examine the movements among its people to-day, is that the only movements which exhibit

the signs of life which can be fixed upon as evidence of nationality—that is, the power of growth from within, the power of evolving special ideals of culture, industry and society—are movements which the politicians denounce or ignore, and which are non-political. The co-operative movement, the Gaelic League, and the Industrial Development Associations are the only bodies in Ireland which have evolved ideals of industry, culture, and a social order of their own, which are Irish. They are creative movements, and apart from them there is actually no evidence of any kind to prove Ireland is a nationality, a living entity with the power of growth from within. Other Irishmen cry out for nationality, but these bodies manifest life themselves. They conform to the biological test of life. The biologist, exploring on the border-ground between organic and inorganic things, had to fix some test of life, and the test of life in an organism he has fixed as its power to take up protoplasm, the physical basis of life, and to change it into living tissue. What life is in itself he does not know, but an organism is living which can take up the substances which are the physical basis of life and transform them and use them to build up its own being. These three movements I have mentioned found Irish people exhibiting in Ireland no signs of organic life. They found, amid all its changes and political turmoil, that Ireland had evolved no culture of its own, no social order of its own, that its industrial life was perishing, and national production was at its lowest ebb. These three movements showed all the signs of life, and communicated it to the Irish people. They took up the unorganized Irishman, the undifferentiated protoplasm of nationality, and growth began immediately. The co-operative movement, with nearly a thousand branches of farmers engaged in productive

co-operation, the Gaelic League, with its ideals of a national culture, the Industrial Development Associations imparting energy to the manufacturer and leading to the creation of new factories and mills; these bodies, with their productive and creative ideals, offer the only evidence Ireland can show of distinct national activity manifesting itself in works and not in talk. I do not call the actions of our one hundred and two members of Parliament a sign of national activity. I do call the energetic life displayed by hundreds of thousands of Irishmen in these three movements a true symptom of national activity, and if our politicians knew their business they would use the work of these bodies as their best arguments for the granting of their political ideal. They would refer to them with pride instead of denouncing them or holding sulkily aloof. Apart from these three movements, which are non-political, no evidence can be offered that there is in Ireland a national entity, a race bursting with possibilities of life, evolving new ideals, creating a new structure of society, new industries, and a new national culture.

I do not know what our politicians think, but they act as if they thought that, given a constitution and the power of self-government, any group of people may become a nation, and nothing more is required. Wessex, if given a constitution and self-government, would become a nation. So will Ireland become a nation, and all will go well with us ever afterwards. Our unstable national life will become stable. But I think it can be shown that political stability is not really maintained by any kind of constitution. Those who place their trust in an aristocracy, a bureaucracy or a democratic system of government, as a means of insuring national stability, are fetish worshippers. There are deeps below a constitution where national wisdom or

national folly are generated among the people. It is the character of the social order and its effect on the daily lives of men and women in a country that we must look into if we are to prophesy political stability or chronic disorder. It has been said that the model of the pyramid was the tent of the herdsman, that the wooden hut of the early Greek found a majestic development in the Parthenon, and that the beauty of Gothic cathedrals recreated the mystery and gloom always about a people living in the forests. The forms that a race has around it in its infancy are not forgotten but are carried on with it, exalted and expanded in its day of national grandeur. Tell me how people work and live in the parishes to-day, and I will tell you how in the next generation the councillors of the nation will act and think. If we have in the country parishes of Ireland a host of unorganized peasant proprietors, each pushing a trivial agricultural business, each acting alone and never in union with his neighbours, the energy of self-interest in its lower forms will become the predominant energy, and this will overflow into rural and county councils, and we shall have frequent jobbery; and in the region of national politics we shall have the conflict of personalities, rather than the pursuit of public interests. We have seen all this in our own time, and we know the cause. For good or ill we are committed to democracy in Ireland. I, for one, believe that democracy will be finally justified, even if it has to pass through cycles of anarchy to its justification. Every man has in him a spark of divinity, and with its bursting into flame, with the discovery of the law of his own being, kingships and overlords must disappear. But because we believe in far off divine events we need not disguise from ourselves the fact that democracy to-day stands in peril of change into anarchy. A

few more social disorders, a national strike, and there may be a ruddy laying of the democratic dust. The great problem before democracy is the evolution of a social order which will ensure, so far as anything human can be ensured, that the democracy will put forward its best thinkers, its wisest men of affairs, and that it will develop a respect for the man of special and expert knowledge. Unless the aristocracy of character and mind replace the demagogue, whose only talent is his fluency on a platform, and the skill with which he echoes back to an ignorant crowd the prejudices which populate the otherwise emptiness of their skulls, our democratic systems of to-day will be no exception to the ancient law or cycle of political change formulated by Aristotle. Home Rule will not give us in Ireland any more sagacious politicians than the Union gave us, unless we have a social order which will educate the people in the choice of representatives. Every people get the kind of politicians they deserve, and we must organize the nation so that the people may be more deserving of, and more discerning of, better qualities in their public representatives than they are at present. Unorganized individualism in a country where the small farmers who read little or nothing form a majority of the population will never lead to this knowledge. The promoters of the organization of agriculture in Ireland are trying to create in every parish associations of men to help each other and to do their business together. These associations demand for their success men of scientific knowledge and business capacity at their head. As the prosperity of the individual in the association depends largely on the success of the communal enterprise, he rapidly develops public spirit and a desire for good leadership, and for the public welfare in which his own is implicated. These qualities in the parishes

will become national attributes. They will permeate local government and national assemblies, and will bring about political stability and sanity and good government. These qualities can never be engendered by an unorganized rural community weltering in an anarchy of individual effort, unable, not having experience of them, to appreciate great qualities of mind or character or the value of special knowledge in affairs. The parish is the cradle of the nation, and, as the song in the ears of the child and the intonation of tender voices and the motion of kindly hands mould mind and spirit and are remembered in age, so the character of the life in our rural communities and the relations men and women there have one to another, enlarged and flung gigantically upon the screen, will be the character of the race as shown in its legislature and councils and public decrees. If we can so remodel Irish country life by our associations that the success of the individual will depend on the success of the community, we will develop economic knowledge, sanity of judgment, and generate a public spirit which will grow upwards, dominate the whole social organism, and act mightily in whatever legislature destiny may have in store for us.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CREATION OF CITIZENS

We have been much more concerned in Ireland with the evolution of a system of government than the evolution of a social order. We have clamoured for the beneficent state, when we should have devoted far more energy towards the creation of the intelligent citizen. Our political movements, which required an army of drilled voters, unanimous and thinking alike, destroyed national character and individuality. Our non-political movements, like the rural life movement and the Gaelic revival, which required, above all things, individual effort and personal initiative, developed national character and intelligence. No wonder there was a conflict between the political and non-political movements. Irishmen were expected by the first to give up thinking for themselves and trust their leaders; and were required by the second, above all things, to act and think for themselves. A good many years ago I remember reading a book entitled "Concepts of Modern Physics." The author explained the ideas held by different groups of scientists about the atom. For one group it was absolutely necessary to imagine the atom as hard, and they worked on that hypothesis. But another group of scientists—chemists, if I remember aright—held that the atom was elastic. They could not work except on that hypothesis. A third group held that the atom did not exist at all,

but what was so supposed was only a vortex in the ether. The Irishman, for the Nationalist politician, had to be hard and unchanging as the atom of the physicist, or success could not be guaranteed in the political phenomena he was trying to bring about. For the purposes of the new non-political movements the Irishman had to be elastic, capable of change and adjustment, or Ireland could have no future. It is a temptation to add that to the Unionist there were no Irishmen at all, but only vortices in the political ether. Stallo, in his book, pleaded for a more metaphysical treatment of the problems of science. He pointed out that the atom could not be hard at the command of the physicist, elastic at the command of the chemist, and be non-existent or a mere vortex in the ether to suit Lord Kelvin. I plead for a more metaphysical consideration of the Irish atom. I would like to believe all three theories, and think it is not inconsistent to hold them all. I find it hard to understand Irish history unless there is an incorruptible and unchangeable atom of nationality in the Irish soul, and I am glad of it. I believe in an elastic mental sphere about it capable of adjustment and change, and am glad of it, otherwise Ireland would be incapable of progress or expansion, and would be a dead sea of humanity. I believe in the eternal relation of the individual soul to the soul of humanity, and that the vortex theory of the soul—that it is a centre of motion in a continuous divine element—is true, and this will finally lead us and all other races to the federation of the world. I understand and sympathise with the fixed passion of the politician for his theory of an Irish State, but I do not believe he will gain the results he hopes for unless his State is composed of people who may truly be called citizens; and citizenship in the true sense is created much

more by the non-political movements than by the political movements in our time. The highest developments of humanity, of civic and patriotic life the world has known, have been in the small states, in communities no larger than Sligo. The sense of solidarity is not begotten by people all belonging to one large nation or great empire; but by union in local enterprises where a personal relationship can exist between the workers, and where success in labour promotes pride, and responsibility is provocative of thought, and experience in control generates wisdom, and we have the intensive cultivation of business ability and intelligence. The fondest memories of the intellectual man turn back to Attica, Sparta, the Dorians, Florence, Venice, and the long list of small nations with great achievements. There was intensive cultivation of humanity. Men were truly citizens in most of these small communities, and discharged their duties to the community by personal service, counsel, and speech, and not in our modern fashion by a vote once in five or six years, which is the destruction of true citizenship and of the sense of responsibility, and the begetting of bureaucracies. To the ancient Greeks, as Mr. Lowes Dickenson says in "The Greek View of Life," our modern society would have appeared as a mere congeries of unsatisfactory human beings, held together partly by political and partly by economic compulsion, but "lacking that conscious identity of interest with the community to which they belong which alone constitutes the citizen." It is, of course, impossible for every citizen to sit and speak at Westminster or College Green, and we cannot have the spirit of true citizenship developed to any extent in these days by participation in political life. Citizenship must be made areality by other means in the modern world, and I will try to show how it can be made a reality.

The Greeks developed the sense of citizenship by political means, and, because their states were very small, it was easy to kindle that conscious identity of interest with the community which draws out the best in man and dedicates it to the service of the State. A man who has the power of one vote among millions of votes, a power which he exercises once in five or six years, soon loses all consciousness of identity of interest with a community too vast and complex for his understanding, and which often in its workings reduces him to poverty. By political means we can now create in but a very few people that conscious identity of interest. Our co-operative associations in Ireland, gathering more and more into themselves the activities connected with production, consumption, and distribution, and even the social activities, as they grow more comprehensive in their aims, make the individual more conscious year by year that his interests are identical with the interests of the community. If it succeeds he shares in its prosperity; and it is this spirit of mutual interdependence and comradeship in life, continually generated and maintained and inbred into the people, which is the foundation on which a great State, a great humanity, a beautiful civilization, can be built. The co-operative associations, properly constituted and organized, alone in modern times are capable of creating this spirit. Individualism in life or business can never create it. I never felt, so far, in any exposition of State Socialism which I have come across, that the writers had any understanding of social psychology, or by what means life may react on life so as to evoke brotherhood and public spirit. Understanding of economics apart from life there often was, and a passion for a mechanical justice, but I, at least, always feel that humanity under State control would be in a *cul de sac*. But it is quite possible to

create without revolution, and by an orderly evolution of society within the State—not controlled by the State, but finally controlling its necessary activities—a number of free associations of workers and producers which, in the country, would have the character of small nations, and in the towns, of the ancient guilds, which would, I believe, produce more beauty, happiness and comfort than the gigantic mediocrity which always is the result of State activity. The Co-operative Commonwealth is the fourth alternative to State Socialism, the Servile State, or our present industrial anarchy; and Irishmen must make up their minds which of the four alternatives they prefer. They will be driven by the forces working in society to one or other of these courses. If capital wins we shall have the Servile State, and an immeasurable bureaucracy to keep the populace in order. If State Socialism wins humanity will have placed all its hopes on one system, and genius, temperament, passion, all the infinite variety of human life, will be constrained by one policy. Our present system is anarchic and inhuman, and the world is hurrying away from it with disgust. The Co-operative Commonwealth alone of all these systems allows freedom and solidarity. It allows for personal genius and unhampered local initiative. It develops a true sense of citizenship among its members. Whatever alternative Irishmen choose to promote they should think long and dispassionately on the prospects for humanity which each offers, and consider well their varying political, social, and economic possibilities. I have suggested briefly some of the economic and political considerations arising out of agricultural co-operation in Ireland, and will turn to consider the social or more human side of Sir Horace Plunkett's movement.

CHAPTER IX

WOMEN ON THE LAND

The object of all religion, art, literature and economics is the creation of perfect human beings. Religion aims at making the perfect human being by acting on man's spiritual nature. Art aims at making the perfect human being by acting on his æsthetic nature; literature by acting on his intellectual nature; while economics aims at perfecting humanity by using material means and agencies. We can only justify our existence as a nation by trying to produce human beings in Ireland as nearly perfect as all the agencies we control can make them. We are all like lost sheep when we forget this central truth, and make art, literature, economics, or nationality an end in themselves. If our new rural communities existed solely for the production of wealth, and had no higher aims, they would deserve all the abuse they have received. But they help not only in the evolution of the economic man and the citizen, but in the evolution of a more kindly human society. The individualist is like a bee trying to amass honey apart from the hive. Wordsworth described man as a creature moving about in worlds not realized, but he could be better described as a creature moving about who does not realize himself. The primitive man with his stone hatchet as implement of slaughter, and his cave dwelling as home, was bursting with unrealized possibilities, and

must have been unhappy, just as a young man of genius intended by nature to be a poet is unhappy if he has to live behind a grocer's counter. The primitive man had within his hairy skull the germs of Plato's philosophy, of Dante's ecstasy, and of Whitman's humanity. He has since partially realized that he is an intellectual being; but he has not realized that he is a social being, and he is still unhappy. He has developed his stone hatchet, an early anti-social implement of slaughter, into thirteen-inch guns, and Dreadnoughts and bomb-dropping airships; and has increased his anti-social, that is, his anti-human propensities, and because he is anti-human he is against himself, against the law of his own being, and has no real happiness.

Humanity to-day is pregnant with unrealized social possibilities even as the primitive savage was bursting with intellectual possibilities, with unbuilt Babylons, unsung epics, uncarven divine Pheidian forms, and mighty machines of war and peace. But man still remains unhappy because he has not realized that at the root of his being is not intellect or power, but feeling and affection. Men pass each other with cold eyes, with no thrill of pleasure in looking on a fellow being. They have not realized that these other beings whom they pass with blank eyes are as necessary to their spiritual happiness and completeness as a warm bed and meals are to their physical comfort. The co-operative community not only provides for economic development and political stability, but leads its members to discover themselves as social beings. The saving or making of money by co-operative means are excellent lures drawing man away from his sulky isolation and miserly doling out of his humanity to himself and his family alone. After half a century of rural co-operation Irish people will have realized that primarily they are social beings

moved by the affections, that they are incomplete by themselves, and that life is only complete and full when there is comradeship in labour and recreation. How much Ireland needs to make this discovery, how much it needs the passion for humanity, we are just beginning to find out. The children attending country schools are badly fed. We allow the State to imprison them for long hours and starve their bodies under the vain pretence of filling up the empty space with mind. Our lunatic asylums are full, and our standard of living is lower than that in almost any European country. During long centuries the voice of woman has rarely been heard in Ireland. Our history is a monotonous record of man's deeds and misdeeds, of man's ideals and passions; and women, the cherishers of life, have been neglected, and their special needs ignored, and, in rural districts especially, the hard lot of the women on the farm has turned many a young girl's heart to the cities of the New World.

A young Irish girl as she grows up to-day on an Irish farm receives a better literary education than her mother received. It is an education which tends to make her more fastidious. Her horizons are wider than her mother's were. She is better able to make comparisons between the lot of a small farmer's wife in Ireland, and the lot of women in other countries. There is hardly an Irish country girl who has not girl friends or sisters in America; and letters from the new world are read and discussed in every parish in Ireland. Now and then one hears the drift of these confidential documents; and comparisons of a woman's lot in the States, either as a domestic help, or as the wife of a prosperous worker there, are continually being made. An Irish girl sees how hard her mother's lot is. The mother cooks for the household. She does its

washing. She mends and often makes its clothes. She sweats over the churn. She feeds the calves, the pigs and the poultry. But it is not all household work. She often labours in the fields. She assists in the heavy toil of binding corn. She helps in the haymaking. She attends the threshing machine. She weeds the fields. She thins the turnips. She picks the potatoes, and lifts the root crops. The life of the small farmer's wife is a life of continual labour indoors and out of doors. Many a young Irish girl must have looked on the wrinkled face and bent back and rheumatic limbs of her mother, and grown maddened in a sudden passion at the thought that her own fresh young life might end just like this, and must have made up her mind that life on an Irish farm was no life for her. The new world is a lure to draw her on, and the nightmare thought of a life spent in exhausting toil on the land impels her from behind. We cannot say how many young Irishwomen leave rural Ireland from just such motives. I know a great many do. We must make up our minds that these conditions, these emotions and feelings, lie behind a great deal of Irish emigration before we discuss remedies. Unless Ireland realizes it is losing a great part of its population for just such reasons it will never attempt to solve the problem, or think about remedies. It is futile to say that if Irishmen get what they want Irishwomen will have their problems solved at the same time. The disabilities attaching to the life of an Irish countrywoman will remain unaffected by changes of government. They seem almost to be an inseparable and eternal part of woman's lot as wife of a small farmer. But are they inseparable? If we answer that they are, I am certain that the migration of women from the land will continue and

even increase. It is a period of awakening intensified self-consciousness for women. Women's rights are everywhere being discussed. They are comparing their share of the world with man's, and are growing more and more dissatisfied. In Ireland they rarely go on platforms, or form trade unions, or press for legislation. Irishwomen as a rule are not politically minded. They do not press for entry into every occupation that man is engaged in. Irishwomen have already been employed like men on the land, and do not like it. They want a more womanly and not a less womanly life, so they do not go on platforms, but pack up their trunks and silently slip away.

CHAPTER X

UNION OF MEN AND WOMEN WORKERS

It may be irritating to many people to have questions like these raised at a time when Irish publicists are trying to simplify Irish problems even to imbecility, and to present a united front in denouncing one evil as the cause of every Irish misfortune, and in advertising one remedy as all-sufficient to cure them. Life is more complicated than that. If my diagnosis of a disease in Irish rural life has any truth in it, as I believe it has, the treatment of it will necessitate a two-fold change in Irish country life, a change in business and technical methods, and a change in social temper. The co-operative associations, which substituted the steam separator and the centralizing methods of butter-making for the home churn over which so many hard-worked wives laboured, indicated the right direction. The introduction of labour-saving machinery by associations of farmers, and the hiring of it out to their members, will do much to lessen severe physical labour on the part of their wives. The change in agricultural economy must be accompanied by a change in social temper, and our associated farmers must realise that life is not merely concerned with production, sale, or purchase; and that on them devolves the grand labour of building up a rural civilization, impelled thereto by a profounder humanity and greater sympathy and

consideration for the weaker sex. The unsocial isolation of farmers in so many country districts—which is foreign to Irish, indeed to any human nature—must be broken up. The erection of village halls, which is going on apace over Ireland, will help in this, and these halls must not be kept, indeed are not kept, only for the use of men. Something corresponding to the mothers' meetings or social gatherings of the Granges in the States must be set in motion here, so that women may meet and discuss their own problems, and educate and encourage each other, and be emboldened by their union to create public opinion in order that reforms may be carried out. We know that young girls are going away from the farm, from a life which offers them little. The State is educating them to greater sensitiveness and fastidiousness. Their horizons are being widened. They make comparisons between here and there. They sigh as they look at their mothers, and they decide against rural life; they slip away. And human life is a chain. People are strung unto each other as link unto link. Where one goes another goes. The old life has little or no power to hold them. It will depend greatly upon the efforts of a new Irish organization, the United Irishwomen—the feminine counterpart of the Irish Agricultural Organization Society, in some sense an offshoot of it, and certainly an ally—whether these conditions can be altered. The advent of this organization, whose objects are to unite Irishwomen for the social and economic advantage of Ireland, is one of the most significant events of recent years.

Quietly into the national life of Ireland womanhood has come with its new standard of values, testing all things as women do by their worth to humanity. Men are for ever adventuring with hungry minds;

women are for ever brooding with hungry hearts over life. Men are at once abstract and gross, and the poles of their nature are more apart than a woman's. Men can dream of heavens and principalities and powers and yet be beasts, and between their abstract ideals and their gross occupations lies a desert where life has been neglected in Ireland; and that has been because the voice of women, the cherisher of life above all things, has been unheard in the national councils. What women, the best women, are concerned with is the character of life. They love strength, health, vitality, kindness. They desire to see the comfortable home, the strong man coming in and out, great sons and the laughter and roundness of well-nourished children. Women are the preservers of life, and because they have had no organized life or union of their own, because they were unable to make known their desires and needs, life has decayed in Ireland. The conditions under which children are taught in the schools, the labour of long hours without sufficient food or none at all, thrust upon very young children whose attendance is enforced by the State; the neglect of sanitation, the carelessness of the conveniences of life shown in the construction of cottages at long distances from water supply; all these things, the effect of which is to enfeeble and impoverish life, have come about because men in Ireland have set about the business of the nation without taking women into their councils—women having had no national organization of their own which ranged over the whole field of women's work, which would have given their opinions weight, and forced recognition of them on public bodies and the legislature. This lack of organization the United Irishwomen will meet. Their aim is "to resurrect the countryside which

the blindness and passions of men have left barren and joyless."

They wish to work with the co-operative associations and to use them wherever it is possible. It is pleasant indeed to find the committees of societies extending their usual operations to become agents for women's work, trying to relieve the skilled women workers from their servitude to agents, almost always local traders, who, if they do not directly violate the provisions of the Truck Act, give out no work unless they are certain the money will come back to their own tills. The beginnings of this comradeship in national effort between men and women will, I think, be recognized by future historians as marking a most important psychological change in our national character. With women's organizations spread over Ireland, working on the home, the garden, the poultry yard, the schools, and making their opinions felt on public boards and the organizations of men, Irish life will be sweetened and humanized. They will bring into Ireland the desire for beauty and comfort which are the beginnings of civilization. They will bring home to the long drugged and long dulled national conscience that the right aim of a nation is the creation of fine human beings, and not merely the production of national wealth. Women, however they may err as individuals, are concerned collectively far more than men about the character and well-being of a race. It is a divinely-implemented instinct with them, and this instinct must be liberated and let work its will. Owing to our unsanitary civilization, with its unhealthy rural slums and its crowded city slums, we have become so unhealthy and ugly, so distorted from the divine image, that beautiful women and shapely men who ought to be normal are abnormal. All the strings

of our being are frayed or flaccid, or hanging loose or are too tight, and there is no health in us; and rarely, rarely do our eyes light up at a beautiful and healthy human being with the perfect modelling and sweet curves which denote perfect health. Most men and women do not know what it is to meet a perfectly healthy human being, or the delight perfect health is to the possessor of it or to the onlooker. Not knowing what it is they do not look for it. I would like to select half a dozen people of both sexes beautiful and healthy persons, and exhibit them in every village in Ireland, and have them lectured on somewhat as follows: "This is what you have to aim at in bringing up your children. To aspire to have a nation of people like these is the right aspiration of a great nationality. Its aim ought to be to beget 'youths, beautiful, gigantic, and sweet-blooded,' and their counterpart in comely and robust women. To this end should be all your co-operation, dairying, tillage, and harvesting. It is to this end you should labour and make sacrifices. But if you scrape and save to leave money to your children after you die instead of giving them illuminated minds and healthy bodies, you are damnably bad parents, enemies of your race, and of the human race. Look now at some normal healthy men and women. See how they bear God's image on them. Somewhat like this was humanity formed by Deity. If you lose the divine image, and deface it or forget it in money-making and money-grubbing, you are in rebellion against God, and are enemies of humanity." This may sound fantastical, but humanity has strayed so far from its divine original and all that it signifies; we have lost, so many of us, the primal blessings of youth, ecstasy, and beauty, we may yet have to rouse a shrivelled and hideous humanity to its own ideal by

methods like these. Humanity has been gradually losing vision of the spirit. It may even lose vision of the form. We have been teaching people to be everything except human beings. We are shaping them as farmers, as traders, labourers, factory hands, but not so as to be human in any sense that we might take pride in the thought. Our sole hope in this respect is in the new women's movement. It may fill up, it desires to fill up, our chilly scheme of rural life with humanity; to drape the bare walls and outlines with comfortable feminine inventions, and enrich the national consciousness, and give a new stimulus to those engaged in the long and often disheartening labour of building up a rural civilization in Ireland. The highest types of men have endeavoured from time immemorial to bring heaven down to earth. This has been the aim of the long line of prophets, saints, seers, religious teachers, and idealists. The highest types of womanhood have always tried to lift earth to heaven. The work of both is necessary. The stalagmite rising from the floor meets the stalactite descending from the roof of the divine cavern, and the one ascends and the other descends until the pillar is joined. This image may symbolize the tendency of all fine masculine ideals and of all fine womanly desires. The best augury of the future of the country life movement in Ireland is the friendly comradeship of these organizations of men and women, each bringing their own special faculties and qualities to the work of building up a rural civilization.

CHAPTER XI

FARMERS AND THE STATE.

The greatest danger the new rural organizations have to face is interference from the State, straddling quite across the path like Apollyon in Bunyan's tale. When the reaction against *laissez-faire* set in, students of political psychology felt it would be severe. For over half a century the State refused to interfere with the evolution of society. But anybody who had studied history and science, and had observed how action and reaction are equal, could have foretold that the policy of letting things alone would have been followed by the policy of letting nothing alone. The State would endeavour to interfere with everything, dominate everything, and break up every organization of the people which threatened effective opposition to, or control over, the actions of the Mandarins. The Servile State, whose swift coming Mr. Hilaire Belloc deplores, seems to be the objective of the ruling and official classes. The official idea of an earthly paradise seems to be to have rows of electrical buttons all round the official armchair, so that when one of these buttons is touched whole battalions of people can be set in motion. All the children of the State would go to school at a certain hour, and the Mandarin will pride himself on knowing at any particular moment what each child in every part of the country is being taught. Another button is touched, an order issued,

and an industry marshals itself in response to official wisdom. It manufactures, packs, and despatches its goods according to the regulations of the Mandarin. For those who obey promptly there are rewards, subsidies, and official smiles. For those who disobey there are no rewards, no subsidies, and official obstruction in their work. It is this kind of official earthly paradise which began blossoming in the mind of some philosophic Irish Mandarins, just about the time when State supervision of every person with less than one hundred and sixty pounds a year was adopted as a policy by the oligarchy who rule these islands. As it is difficult just at present to lay hold of urban industries and urban life, the spread of agricultural co-operation has seemed to our Irish Mandarins the very thing to begin on. Here were associations which could be drilled and disciplined so as to yield Mandarins and inspectors the exquisite sensation of being rulers. They could be bribed into the fold by loans, subsidies, certificates and official smiles. They could be penalized by withholding information, loans, subsidies, and certificates. Here was a joyful prospect indeed, a fair and glittering vista leading away to the official earthly paradise; and it has been the continual aim of some of the Mandarins of the Department of Agriculture to lay hold of, supervise, and control the operations of the co-operative societies. The greater the movement grew the greater became the anxiety of the Mandarins to control it. They felt it would control them if it was not shackled. Their souls ached with desire, and they rejoiced at every assault upon its leaders by narrow-minded politicians and petty trade interests; any attack which would drive the guides of the movement out of public life would make the societies an easy prey. This desire of the Mandarins for control,

this itch for overlordship over everything which besets the new school of bureaucrats, is the greatest danger before us in our path to the Co-operative Commonwealth. It has manifested itself lately in an application by the present head of the Department to the Development Commissioners for funds to enable him to become the director of agricultural co-operation in Ireland, and to wrest the leadership of the movement from the man who created it—a proposition which, I think, is the meanest that ever came out of the mean soul of a politician. The greatest voluntary movement Ireland has ever seen is in danger of being eaten up by the State, which Neitzsche rightly called “the coldest of all cold monsters.”

The workers in that movement have laboured with an energy and self-sacrifice which is one of the great moral glories of Ireland. They have poured out treasures of intellect, energy, and money lavishly to build up a rural civilization. Catholic and Protestant, Unionist and Nationalist, have worked together. But all this glow of idealism, this kindly life, was only possible because the movement was self-controlled. The practical man and the idealist laboured with equal enthusiasm: the first because the work of the world prospered; the second because things seen were to him the symbols of a nobler transformation taking place in the minds of men. If the State, “the coldest of all cold monsters,” is allowed by Irishmen to take control of this work, all the fire of life in it will die out. A State department is sterilized of all beauty of thought. Whoever enters the service of the State has to keep his heart under lock and key. His official duty is to organize the undisputed platitude, and to preach the most material commonplace. We all know these are necessary duties, but are we to give over our

hopes and our ideals also to this benumbing agency? Is Ireland not to have one activity of its children free from the greed of the Mandarin for control? Our supine population has allowed the most gigantic State machinery to be set up over it that the modern world has knowledge of. Is nothing to be exempt? For this thing is surely true; that if our voluntary workers are dispensed with, and the sole link which united the associations is their relation to a State department, they will never be able to resist effectively further encroachments on their liberty by the Mandarins. Their officials will be bribed by doles, or thwarted with restrictions, until the chilly ideal of the bureaucracy is attained; until the whole activities of the country are under its control to satisfy its itch for power, and it can contemplate with satisfaction the soulless mediocrity it has instituted. I have never dreaded the political attacks on the new rural movement. Most of our latter day Irish politicians are incompetent for any purpose, even their own special job. They have never been able to devise a scheme of self-government for Ireland, but look with a cringing consciousness of their own incompetence to English statesmen to devise a scheme for them; and to the ministers they declare incapable of governing them, and who ask what kind of government they want, they answer, like the jarvey to his fare who asks what he owes, "I lave it to yourself, yer honour." The politicians never had either power or ability to stop the growth of agricultural co-operation, though they tried their utmost. The trade objection has been a help rather than a hindrance; but the State, with its gigantic machinery, its innumerable array of officials, and its power to draw on the public purse for objects which the public loathe, is a real danger—the only danger before us, and the only one worth

thinking about. I have sometimes despaired in face of the apathy of our country people, and of the difficulty of educating them. Sometimes I have wondered whether we Irish were a people who could ever stand on our own legs without State crutches to support us in every action. That genial American humourist, Professor James, who theorized about psychology, divided all philosophical systems into two classes. One set of philosophical ideas originated with, and catered for, the intellectual comfort of people who in the far West, the region where Blanco Posnett lived and blasphemed, are called "Tenderfoots." The second set of philosophical ideas originated with and developed the self-respect of people who, in the region of the Rockies, are called "Toughs." The names explain themselves. Our politicians and our official classes act as if they believed every Irishman was a Tenderfoot. The self-help movement has acted on the assumption that Irish people at bottom were Toughs. The results of work by the Toughs are creameries, bacon factories, co-operative banks, poultry societies, woollen mills, ship-building, and the like. The best expression of the Tenderfoot policy can be found in the Parish Committees, which paid men to work on their own holdings. But the Tenderfoot is far greater in words than deeds. He is always weeping over the sorrows of Ireland, and asking the State to wipe away the tears with pocket-handkerchiefs costing a million apiece. The policy of self-help he calls doctrinaire cant. The Tenderfoot policy triumphed in the Congested Districts Board, whose area was enlarged a few years ago, until it now embraces one-third of Ireland. I believe that the area for Tenderfoot operations should have been reduced to about thirty parishes along the western seaboard. I do not deny

there are occasions when the Tenderfoot theory holds good—when people must be helped first before they can help themselves. Babies are rightly treated by Tenderfoot mothers, but they will grow up useless little cubs if they are not toughened off as soon as possible. The worst parishes along the western seaboard, like Carna, Rossmuck, Carraroe, and Pullathomas I give over to the Tenderfoot politicians and economists, but I object to giving one-third of Ireland to be demoralized by parish committees and dole-dealing officials. How is an agent of the self-help movement to go into a parish which is already made into a ward of the political hospital by officials who stand around it with their best bedside manner? How is he to preach his wholesome gospel of self-respect and self-help, when the patient has already a tribe of Mandarins holding out spoons to him filled with Tenderfoot jelly? I hold that the whole salvation of Ireland depends on what Irish people can do for themselves. I think the worst enemies Ireland has to-day are those who are for ever supplicating State aid on her behalf. If by nature we are a Tenderfoot race, like the French, then all our efforts have been misdirected. I have had some doubts myself as to the proper attribution of Irish people to the class of Toughs or Tenderfeet until this year, when the movement of organized farmers rose in protest against State interference or political interference with their work. I am now convinced that there are enough Toughs in Ireland to carry through the scheme of rural organization, and to keep the Mandarins and politicians in their proper place: who will see that officials are the servants of the public and not its masters. The Eden of the bureaucrat is the hell of the governed. Bureaucracies in no country have brought contentment.

Our rural movement, grown strong and independent, will work in harmony with the State, and will collaborate with it in schemes mutually agreed on, but it will resist, and rightly resist, all attempts at domination by Government departments—manned by people of the class Mr. Wells calls “second-rate industrious persons.” At least half our officials, after receiving their appointments, show symptoms of a disease which I cannot describe otherwise than as an attack of incipient Cæsarism. It may be the natural spirituality of the Irish mind which tries to bring the element of infinity into its occupations. But that is not the way or the place to grow that flower. Without free communities developing according to their own desires, carrying out some scheme they themselves have devised, and for which they accept full responsibility, there can be no progressive life in Ireland. The aim of the wise statesman will be to foster those independent and self-reliant movements eager in promoting schemes of self-help. The effect of the policy of our present public men is to turn the Irish into a race of economic babies, with their lips forever nuzzling at the nipples of the State. As the new movement spreads it will put forward its own public men: and it is possible yet in Ireland, where the farmers at least are independent, to prevent the organization of the Servile State which seems inevitable in England, where the last act of the legislature has slipped the noose round some fifteen million people, and where the noose is likely to be pulled tighter by every succeeding Parliament.

The founder of the Department of Agriculture gave it such a constitution that in due time, as the other movement he created expanded, its representatives would overflow into the Council of Agriculture and the Agricultural Board, and control the

Department's policy and keep it to its proper function—which is to supply the farmers with the technical information they want and not to force on them policies they detest. Experts ought to be on tap and not on top. The official classes will, I believe, be much happier serving the public than in setting snares, or inventing schemes, to control industries and movements they had no part in creating, where their interference would be fatal to any fine idealism or noble humanity. The country has seen lately how a great national institution can be degraded in popular estimation by its headship being handed over to an incompetent economist and bitter partisan. Until the organized farmers can control the institution created to serve their interests, the less authority over their movement they allow to its officials the better.

CHAPTER XII

IDEALS OF THE NEW RURAL SOCIETY.

For a country where political agitations follow each other as rapidly as plagues in an Eastern city, it is curious how little constructive thought we can show on the ideals of a rural civilization. But economic peace ought surely to have its victories to show as well as political war. I would a thousand times rather dwell on what men and women working together may do than on what may result from majorities at Westminster. The beauty of great civilizations has been built up far more by the people working together than by any corporate action of the State. In these socialistic days we grow pessimistic about our own efforts and optimistic about the working of the legislature. I think we do right to expect great things from the State, but we ought to expect still greater things from ourselves. We ought to know full well that, if the State did twice as much as it does, we shall never rise out of mediocrity among the nations unless we have unlimited faith in the power of our personal efforts to raise and transform Ireland, and unless we translate the faith into works. The State can give a man an economic holding, but only the man himself can make it into an Earthly Paradise, and it is a dull business, unworthy of a being made in the image of God, to grind away at work without some noble end to be served, some glowing ideal to be attained.

Ireland is a horribly melancholy and cynical country. Our literary men and poets, who ought to give us courage, have taken to writing about the Irish as people who "went forth to battle, but always fell," sentimentalizing over incompetence instead of invigorating us and liberating us and directing our energies. We have developed a new and clever school of Irish dramatists who say they are holding up the mirror to Irish peasant nature, but they reflect nothing but decadence. They delight in the broken lights of insanity, the ruffian who beats his wife, the weakling who is unfortunate in love and who goes and drinks himself to death, while the little decaying country towns are seized on with avidity and exhibited on the stage in every kind of decay and human futility and meanness. Well, it is good to be chastened in spirit, but it is a thousand times better to be invigorated in spirit. To be positive is always better than to be negative. These writers understand and sympathize with Ireland more through their lower nature than their higher nature. Judging by the things people write in Ireland, and by what they go to see performed on the stage, it is more pleasing to them to see enacted characters they know are meaner than themselves than to see characters which they know are nobler than themselves.

All this is helping on our national pessimism and self-mistrust. It helps to fix these features permanently in our national character, which were excusable enough as temporary moods after defeat. The younger generation should hear nothing about failures. It should not be hypnotized into self-contempt. Our energies in Ireland are sapped by a cynical self-mistrust which is spread everywhere through society. It is natural enough that the elder generation, who were promised so many millenniums,

but who actually saw four million people deducted from the population, should be cynical. But it is not right they should give only to the younger generation the heritage of their disappointments without any heritage of hope. From early childhood parents and friends are hypnotizing the child into beliefs and unbeliefs, and too often they are exiling all nobility out of life, all confidence, all trust, all hope; they are insinuating a mean self-seeking, a self-mistrust, a vulgar spirit which laughs at every high ideal, until at last the hypnotized child is blinded to the presence of any beauty or nobility in life. No country can ever hope to rise beyond a vulgar mediocrity where there is not unbounded confidence in what its humanity can do. The self-confident American will make a great civilization yet, because he believes with all his heart and soul in the future of his country and in the powers of the American people. What Whitman called their "barbaric yawp" may yet turn into the lordliest speech and thought, but without self-confidence a race will go no whither. If Irish people do not believe they can equal or surpass the stature of any humanity which has been upon the globe, then they had better all emigrate and become servants to some superior race, and leave Ireland to new settlers who may come here with the same high hopes as the Pilgrim Fathers had when they went to America.

We must go on imagining better than the best we know. Even in their ruins now, Greece and Italy seem noble and beautiful with broken pillars and temples made in their day of glory. But before ever there was a white marble temple shining on a hill it shone with a more brilliant beauty in the mind of some artist who designed it. Do many people know how that marvellous Greek civilization spread along the shores of the Mediterranean?

Little nations owning no more land than would make up an Irish barony sent out colony after colony. The seed of beautiful life they sowed grew and blossomed out into great cities and half divine civilizations. Italy had a later blossoming of beauty in the Middle Ages, and travellers to-day go into little Italian towns and find them filled with master-pieces of painting and architecture and sculpture, witnesses of a time when nations no larger than an Irish county rolled their thoughts up to Heaven and mixed their imagination with the angels. Can we be contented in Ireland with the mean streets of our country towns and the sordid heaps of our villages, dominated in their economics by the vendors of alcohol, and inspired as to their ideals by the vendors of political animosities?

I would not mind people fighting in a passion to get rid of all that barred some lordly scheme of life, but quarrels over political bones from which there is little or nothing wholesome to be picked only disgust. People tell me that the countryside must always be stupid and backward, and I get angry, as if it were said that only townspeople had immortal souls, and it was only in the city that the flame of divinity breathed into the first men had any unobscured glow. The countryside in Ireland could blossom into as much beauty as the hillsides in mediæval Italy if we could but get rid of our self-mistrust. We have all that any race ever had to inspire them, the heavens overhead, the earth underneath, and the breath of life in our nostrils. I would like to exile the man who would set limits to what we can do, who would take the crown and sceptre from the human will and say, marking out some petty enterprise as the limit: "Thus far can we go and no farther, and here shall our life be stayed." Therefore I hate to hear of stagnant societies who think because

they have made butter well that they have crowned their parochial generation with a halo of glory, and can rest content with the fame of it all, listening to the whirr of the steam separators and pouching in peace of mind the extra penny a gallon for their milk. And I dislike the little groups who meet a couple of times a year and call themselves co-operators, because they have got their fertilizers more cheaply, and have done nothing else. Why, the village gombeen man has done more than that! He has at least brought most of the necessities of life there by his activities; and I say, if we co-operators do not aim at doing more than the Irish Scribes and Pharisees we shall have little to be proud of. A poet, interpreting the words of Christ to His followers, who had scorned the followers of the old order, made Him say :

"Scorn ye their hopes, their tears, their inward prayers?
I say unto you, see that your souls live
A deeper life than theirs."

The co-operative movement is delivering over the shaping of the rural life of Ireland, and the building up of its rural civilization, into the hands of Irish farmers. The old order of things has left Ireland unlovely. But if we do not passionately strive to build it better, better for the men, for the women, for the children, of what worth are we? We continually come across the phrase "the dull Saxon" in our Irish papers; it crops up in the speeches of our public orators, but it was an English poet who said:

"I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land."

And it was the last great poet England has produced,

who had so much hope for humanity in his country that in his latest song he could mix earth with heaven, and say that to human eyes—

“ Shall shine the traffic of Jacob’s ladder
Hung betwixt Heaven and Charing Cross.”

Shall we think more meanly of the future of Ireland than these “dull Saxons” think of the future of their island? Shall we be content with humble crumbs fallen from the table of life, and sit like beggars waiting only for what the commonwealth can do for us, leaving all high hopes and aims to our rulers, whether they be English or Irish? Every people get the kind of government they deserve. A nation can exhibit no greater political wisdom in the mass than it generates in its units. It is the pregnant idealism of the multitude which gives power to the makers of great nations, otherwise the prophets of civilization are helpless as preachers in the desert and solitary places. So I have always preached self-help above all other kinds of help, knowing that if we strove passionately after this righteousness all other kinds of help would be at our service. So, too, I would brush aside the officious interferer in our co-operative affairs, who would offer on behalf of the State to do for us what we should, and could, do far better ourselves. We can build up a rural civilization in Ireland, shaping it to our hearts’ desires, warming it with life, but our rulers and officials can never be warmer than a stepfather, and have no “large, divine, and comfortable words” for us; they tinker at the body when it is the soul which requires to be healed and made whole. The soul of Ireland has to be kindled, and it can be only kindled by the thought of great deeds and not by the hope of petty parsimonies or petty gains.

Now, great deeds are never done vicariously.

They are done directly and personally. No country has grown to greatness mainly by the acts of some great ruler, but by the aggregate activities of all its people. Therefore, every Irish community should make its own ideals and should work for them. As great work can be done in a parish as in the legislative assemblies with a nation at gaze. Do people say : " It is easier to work well with a nation at gaze ? " I answer that true greatness becomes the North Pole of humanity, and when it appears all the needles of Being point to it. You of the young generation, who have not yet lost the generous ardour of youth, believe it is as possible to do great work and make noble sacrifices, and to roll the acceptable smoke of offering to Heaven by your work in an Irish parish, as in any city in the world. Like the Greek architects—who saw in their dreams hills crowned with white marble-pillared palaces and images of beauty, until these rose up in actuality—so should you, not forgetting national ideals, still most of all set before yourselves the ideal of your own neighbourhood. How can you speak of working for all Ireland, which you have not seen, if you do not labour and dream for the Ireland before your eyes, which you see as you look out of your own door in the morning, and on which you walk up and down through the day ?

" What dream shall we dream, or what labour shall we undertake ? " you may ask, and it is right that those who exhort should be asked in what manner and how precisely they would have the listener act or think. I answer : the first thing to do is to create and realize the feeling for the community, and break up the evil and petty isolation of man from man. This can be done by every kind of co-operative effort where combined action is better than individual action. The parish cannot take care

of the child as well as the parents, but you will find in most of the labours of life combined action is more fruitful than individual action. Some of you have found this out in many branches of agriculture, of which your dairying, agricultural, credit, poultry, and flax societies are witness. Some of you have combined to manufacture; some to buy in common; some to sell in common. Some of you have the common ownership of thousands of pounds' worth of expensive machinery. Some of you have carried the idea of co-operation for economic ends further, and have used the power which combination gives you to erect village halls and to have libraries of books, the windows through which the life and wonder and power of humanity can be seen. Some of you have light-heartedly, in the growing sympathy of unity, revived the dances and songs and sports which are the right relaxation of labour. Some Irishwomen here and there have heard beyond the four walls in which so much of their lives are spent the music of a new day, and have started out to help and inspire the men and be good comrades to them; and calling themselves United Irishwomen, they have joined, as men have joined, to help their sisters who are in economic servitude, or who suffer from the ignorance and indifference to their special needs in life which pervade the administration of local government. We cannot build up a rural civilization in Ireland without the aid of Irish women. It will help life little if we have methods of the twentieth century in the fields, and those of the fifth century in the home. A great writer said: "Woman is the last thing man will civilize." If a woman had written on that subject she would have said: "Woman is the last thing man thinks about when he is building up his empires." It is true that the consciousness of woman has been always centred too

close to the dark and obscure roots of the Tree of Life, while men have branched out more to the sun and wind, and to-day the starved soul of womanhood is crying out over the world for an intellectual life and for more chance of earning a living. If Ireland will not listen to this cry, its daughters will go on slipping silently away to other countries, as they have been doing—all the best of them, all the bravest, all those most mentally alive, all those who would have made the best wives and the best mothers—and they will leave at home the timid, the stupid, and the dull to help in the deterioration of the race and to breed sons as sluggish as themselves. In the new world women have taken an important part in the work of the National Grange, the greatest agency in bettering the economic and social conditions of the agricultural population in the States. In Ireland the women must be welcomed into the work of building up a rural civilization, and be aided by men in the promotion of those industries with which women have been immemorially associated. We should not want to see women separated from the activities and ideals and aspirations of men. We should want to see them working together and in harmony. If the women carry on their work in connection with the associations by which men earn their living they will have a greater certainty of permanence. I have seen too many little industries and little associations of women workers spring up and perish in Ireland, which depended on the efforts of some one person who had not drunk of the elixir of immortal youth, and could not always continue the work she started; and I have come to the conclusion that the women's organizations must be connected with the men's organizations, must use their premises, village halls and rooms for women's meetings. I do not believe women's work

can be promoted so well in any other way. Men and women have been companions in the world from the dawn of time. I do not know where they are journeying to, but I believe they will never get to the Delectable City if they journey apart from each other, and do not share each other's burdens.

Working so, we create the conditions in which the spirit of the community grows strong. We create the true communal idea, which the Socialists miss in their dream of a vast amalgamation of whole nationalities in one great commercial undertaking. The true idea of the clan or commune or tribe is to have in it as many people as will give it strength and importance, and so few people that a personal tie may be established between them. Humanity has always grouped itself instinctively in this way. It did so in the ancient clans and rural communes, and it does so in the parishes and co-operative associations. If they were larger they would lose the sense of unity. If they were smaller they would be too feeble for effectual work, and could not take over the affairs of their district. A rural commune or co-operative community ought to have, to a large extent, the character of a nation. It should manufacture for its members all things which it profitably can manufacture for them, employing its own workmen, carpenters, bootmakers, makers and menders of farming equipment, saddlery, harness, etc. It should aim at feeding its members and their families cheaply and well, as far as possible out of the meat and grain produced in the district. It should have a mill to grind their grain, a creamery to manufacture their butter; or where certain enterprises like a bacon factory are too great for it, it should unite with other co-operative communities to furnish out such an enterprise. It should sell for the members their produce, and buy for them

their requirements, and hold for them labour-saving machinery. It should put aside a certain portion of its profits every year for the creation of halls, libraries, places for recreation and games, and it should pursue this plan steadily with the purpose of giving its members every social and educational advantage which the civilization of their time affords. It should have its councils or village parliaments, where improvements and new ventures could be discussed. Such a community would soon generate a passionate devotion to its own ideals and interests among the members, who would feel how their fortunes rose with the fortunes of the associations of which they were all members. It would kindle and quicken the intellect of every person in the community. It would create the atmosphere in which national genius would emerge and find opportunities for its activity. The clan ought to be the antechamber of the nation and the training ground for its statesmen. What opportunity leadership in the councils of such a rural community would give to the best minds! The man of social genius at present finds an unorganized community, and he does not know how to affect his fellow citizens. A man might easily despair of affecting the destinies of a nation of forty million people, but yet start with eagerness to build up a kingdom of the size of Sligo, and shape it nearer to the heart's desire. The organization of the rural population of Ireland in co-operative associations will provide the instrument ready to the hand of the social reformer. Some associations will be more dowered with ability than others, but one will learn from another, and a vast network of living, progressive organizations will cover rural Ireland, democratic in constitution and governed by the aristocracy of intellect and character.

Such associations would have great economic advantages in that they would be self-reliant and self-contained, and would be less subject to fluctuation in their prosperity brought about by national disasters and commercial crises than the present unorganized rural communities are. They would have all their business under local control; and, aiming at feeding, clothing, and manufacturing locally from local resources as far as possible, the slumps in foreign trade, the shortage in supplies, the dislocations of commerce would affect them but little. They would make the community wealthier. Every step towards this organization already taken in Ireland has brought with it increased prosperity, and the towns benefit by increased purchasing power on the part of these rural associations. New arts and industries would spring up under the ægis of the local associations. Here we should find the weaving of rugs, there the manufacture of toys, elsewhere the women would be engaged in embroidery or lace-making, and, perhaps, everywhere we might get a revival of the old local industry of weaving homespuns. We are dreaming of nothing impossible, nothing which has not been done somewhere already, nothing which we could not do here in Ireland. True, it cannot be done all at once, but if we get the idea clearly in our minds of the building up of a rural civilization in Ireland, we can labour at it with the grand persistence of mediæval burghers in their little towns, where one generation laid down the foundations of a great cathedral, and saw only in hope and faith the gorgeous glooms over altar and sanctuary, and the blaze and flame of stained glass, where apostles, prophets, and angelic presences were pictured in fire: and the next generation raised high the walls, and only the third generation saw the realization

of what their grandsires had dreamed. We in Ireland should not live only from day to day, for the day only, like the beasts in the field, but should think of where all this long cavalcade of the Gael is tending, and how and in what manner their tents will be pitched in the evening of their generation. A national purpose is the most unconquerable and victorious of all things on earth. It can raise up Babylons from the sands of the desert, and make imperial civilizations spring from out a score of huts, and after it has wrought its will it can leave monuments that seem as everlasting a portion of nature as the rocks. The Pyramids and the Sphinx in the sands of Egypt have seemed to humanity for centuries as much a portion of nature as Errigal, or Benbulbin, or Slieve Gullion, have seemed a portion of nature to our eyes in Ireland.

We must have some purpose or plan in building up an Irish civilization. No artist takes up his paints and brushes and begins to work on his canvas without a clear idea burning in his brain of what he has to do, else were his work all smudges. Does anyone think that, out of all these little cabins and farm-houses dotting the green of Ireland, there will come harmonious effort to a common end without organization and set purpose? The idea and plan of a great rural civilization must shine like a burning lamp in the imagination of the youth of Ireland, or we shall only be at cross-purposes and end in little futilities. We are very fond in Ireland of talking of Ireland a nation. The word "nation" has a kind of satisfying sound, but I am afraid it is an empty word with no rich significance to most who use it. The word "laboratory" has as fine a sound, but only the practical scientist has a true conception of what may take place there, what roar of strange forces,

what mingling of subtle elements, what mystery and magnificence in atomic life. The word without the idea is like the purse without the coin, the skull without the soul, or any other sham or empty deceit. Nations are not built up by the repetition of words, but by the organizing of intellectual forces. If any of my readers would like to know what kind of thought goes to the building up of a great nation, let them read the life of Alexander Hamilton, by Oliver, which can be obtained for a shilling. To this extraordinary man the United States owe their constitution, almost their existence. To him, far more than to Washington, the idea, plan, shape of all that marvellous dominion owes its origin and character. He seemed to hold in his brain, while America was yet a group of half barbaric settlements, the idea of what it might become. He laid down the plans, the constitution, the foreign policy, the trade policy, the relation of State to State, and it is only within the last few years almost that America has realized that she had in Hamilton a supreme political and social intelligence, the true fountain head of what she has since become.

We have not half a continent to deal with, but size matters nothing. The Russian Empire, which covers half Europe, and stretches over the Ural Mountains to the Pacific, would weigh light as a feather in the balance if we compare its services to humanity with those of the little State of Attica, which was no larger than Tipperary. Every State which has come to command the admiration of the world has had clearly conceived ideals which it realized before it went the way which all empires, even the greatest, must go; becoming finally a legend, a fable, or a symbol. We have to lay down the foundations of a new social order in Ireland, and, if the possibilities of it are realized, our thousand years

of sorrow and darkness may be followed by as long a cycle of happy effort and ever-growing prosperity. We shall want all these plans whether we are ruled from Westminster or College Green. Without an imaginative conception of what kind of civilization we wish to create, the best government from either quarter will never avail to lift us beyond national mediocrity. I write for those who have joined the ranks of co-operators without perhaps realizing all that the movement meant, or all that it tended to. Because we hold in our hearts and keep holy there the vision of a great future, we have fought passionately for the entire freedom of our movement from external control, lest the meddling of politicians or official persons without any inspiration should deflect, for some petty purpose or official gratification, the strength of that current which was flowing and gathering strength unto the realization of great ideals. Every country has its proportion of little souls which could find ample room on a threepenny bit, and be majestically housed in a thimble, who follow out some little minute practice in an ecstasy of self-satisfaction, seeking some little job which is the El Dorado of their desires as if there were nought else, as if humanity were not going from the Great Deep to the Great Deep of Deity, with wind and water, fire and earth, stars and sun, lordly companions for it on its path to a divine destiny. We have our share of these in Ireland in high and low places, but I do not write for them. This essay is for those who are working at laying deep the foundations of a new social order, to hearten them with some thought of what their labour may bring to Ireland. I welcome to this work the United Irishwomen. As one of their poetesses has said in a beautiful song, the services of women to Ireland in the past have been the services of

mourners to the stricken. But for to-day and to-morrow we need hope and courage and gaiety, and I repeat for them the last passionate words of her verse:

"Rise to your feet, O daughters, rise,
Our mother still is young and fair,
Let the world look into your eyes
And see her beauty shining there.
Grant of that beauty but one ray,
Heroes shall leap from every hill:
To-day shall be as yesterday,
The red blood burns in Ireland still."

CHAPTER XIII

LIFE FINDING ITS LEVEL

At the beginnings of the human household some of old Mother Nature's children decided to look after the House and its furnishing, and some decided to go into the fields and grow things. Now the Children in the House were always together, and they knew each other's minds ; and as they rarely saw the Children working in the fields they began to lose interest in them, and finally forgot all about them, and treated them as strangers, and grumbled at them when the fruit, vegetables, or grain, came to the door of the house in bad condition, or there was not enough, or the Children of the Fields asked too much for them. The Children in the House made it gayer and gayer. They lit it up and had brilliant festivals, and the Children in the Fields saw the lights in the House, and they became envious. Then they said : " We have as much right to be in the House as those others." So many of them left working in the Fields and crowded into the House, and the Children left in the Fields grew more and more lonely, and more and more they went to live in the House, and share in its pleasures. Then it came about that the Children in the Fields did not grow enough fruit, or vegetables, or grain, to give plenty to the Children in the House, and the household grew hungry and quarrelsome. The Children in the House have never acted fairly by the Children

in the Fields. They have been trying indeed to do so lately ; but they are acting ignorantly, because the Children in the House, who arrange everything, do not really understand how to arrange life for the Children in the Fields, and there are long centuries of neglect to make up, and for long centuries the wealth of the world has poured into the cities. There are pleasures to be enjoyed. There are libraries where all the knowledge of the world is to be learned, and theatres where all the gaiety in the heart of man or woman can be satiated. There the great, the wise, and the famous congregate. There national destinies are decided. The day in the cities is busy and crowded with activity. The night of the cities seems like a fairyland with the glitter of lights, and with the friendly people in the streets bent on pleasure, and the houses, too, seem built up to high heaven to those who know only the cabins and cottages ; and, when the misty brilliance of lamps is diffused over the streets, the great buildings rise up above them like imagined Babylon or many-templed Nineveh. All this allures the young country boy or girl coming from the fields ; and it is only when they are caught in the net that they realize that every high beauty in the city exists because of a deformity alongside it : that stupendous wealth exists because there are vast gulfs of poverty and despair. But the Children of the Fields do not know this, and they come flocking, allured by the distant gleam. This is going on the world over, but it will not go on always. Reactions take place inevitably, even if they occupy vast periods of time ; and the reaction against the domination of the town has begun over the world. There is an immense social change taking place : part of this change is the organization of the farmers to

protect themselves and their industry, and this organization, when complete, will shift the centre of power to the country from the town where it has been too long. Humanity is like water, and is always pushing to its own highest level; and since all cannot live in the city those who must live in the country are organizing themselves, from farthest east in Japan to farthest west in California, and they are going to claim for the Children of the Fields access to knowledge, beauty, pleasure, and power. They are going to build up a civilization so pleasant, so kindly, so healthy, so prosperous, that the Children of the Fields will not want to live with the Children of the House; but will be content with where they are, growing comely and sweet-blooded in the sunshine and pure air, growing wise at their own labours, and strong in their union. They will have rustic sports and festivals of their own, and because there will be more of them in the Fields and less in the House, and because they will be better educated and better equipped, they will produce more, and the Children in the House will be better fed, and the balance will be struck. This is the work that, consciously or unconsciously, organized farmers over the world are putting their hands to. Some of them work only for immediate gain, and nobody can blame them. But some are working for higher aims, not only in Ireland but in America and Europe. There are men labouring as heroically at the building up of a beautiful rural civilization as any hero in the past wrought at the making of Rome or Athens or Memphis, or any of those proud cities which have become to us symbols of the magnificence of the world. Here, too, humanity is trying to find its own highest level. However suppressed, clogged, shackled—that life, in spite of all indirections,

missings of the way, is eternally aiming at the highest. What the social reformer has to do is not to coerce but to liberate and unite those human energies, and let them express themselves freely and rise freely to their natural level. That they will find their natural level is inevitable, and that level will seem high or low as men are optimists, or pessimists. I am one of those who believe that the natural level of the spirit in man is with the highest in the universe, and I regard as damnable heresies all other conceptions of his destiny. I hate the people who talk scornfully of Paddy or Hodge, of those who work on the land; as if the low brow and the dull brain were an inevitable accompaniment of such toil, as if Spirit were not there, an awful presence, a majesty imprisoned from the infinite. Mr. Edmond Holmes tells us he found, when he was inspector of national schools in England, a backward country district where the genius of a teacher divined a soul and a kinship with immortal things in the children of Hodge. She bent herself to liberate these powers, and a crowd of lovely things went fluttering out of the opened cage. There the feet of the little rustics danced as the feet of life should dance. They loved and saw beauty; that is, they saw with the divine eye. There art and music and literature were loved. There was imagination, happiness, and quick intelligence; and all this because life was not suppressed nor disciplined in formal obedience to an external law. The higher was evoked and it disciplined the lower. Yet all this vision and beauty did not make the children unfit for labour afterwards, for on inquiry among the farmers it was found that no sluggards or lazy workers came out of that school. The evocation of the higher faculties in men or women does not unfit them for the world's

labour; for the higher comprehends the lower, though the lower does not include the higher. I can speak out of my own knowledge of Ireland. I believe there that those who live on the land have a deeper life than those who live in the towns; who deceive themselves, thinking that the twinkling of a sophisticated mind is wisdom; who collect ideas as if they were collecting postage stamps. The shallow puddle can reflect the stars and heavens without being deep. The country folk comprehend great fundamental ideas. They do not understand the sophisticated urban mind. But the rural reformer who starts his work with the idea that those who labour on the land are, by nature of their avocation, less capable than the city folk of moulding life nobly and greatly, are unjust to them and will achieve little. Indeed it is with the people who live on the land, who are bathed continually in sunlight and pure air, who are close to Mother Nature, that the future and hope of humanity lies. There is no future for life in the great cities. Life shrivels there and decays, divorced from the fountain of life. Has anyone ever heard of a Londoner of the fourth generation? The country people carry quietly about with them, unknown to themselves, divine powers and tremendous destinies; as children predestined to greatness carry, unknown to themselves or others, powers that will make beauty or stormy life in the world hereafter. The country men have been repressed through the ages. They have been serfs. They have been neglected. They were not allowed to combine to work out their own destiny, but were used as instruments to make wealth and power for others. Yet the people on the land have the mighty energies of nature in their blood; and if they are allowed to unite freely, to

work out unrestricted their destiny, nature will work through them the miracles of wonder and beauty she brings to pass in other forms of life, in the beauty of forests, of birds and flowers.

I have written this little book, which, I know, is incomplete and chaotic, and unsatisfactory even as an expression of my own ideas, because at this moment the rural life movement in Ireland, from which I hope so much, is being assailed on all sides and misunderstood, the objects of its promoters perverted. I wished to show, however inadequately, that it is a sincere attempt to solve some Irish and some human problems, and not the move in a piece of mean political strategy which it has been held up to Ireland to be.

NOTE

The following is a summary of the societies organized by the Irish Agricultural Organization Society as compiled from the last available statistics, those for the year ending December 31st, 1910, the figures for 1911 not being yet procurable :—

Type of Society.	No. of Societies.	Member-ship.	Turn-over.
			£
Dairy Societies	312	44,792	1,999,313
Auxiliary Societies not separately registered	79	—	—
Agricultural Societies	166	16,743	124,720
Credit Societies	237	19,190	55,855
Poultry Societies	18	6,188	61,213
Home Industries Societies	20	1,376	4,815
Miscellaneous (including Flax, Bacon-curing Societies) and Bee-keepers	47	5,976	62,737
Federations	2	247	280,906
	881	94,512	2,589,559

The turnover of 924 societies in existence on December 31st, 1911, is estimated at £2,750,000.

From the beginning of the movement in 1889 to the close of last year the trade turnover of the movement, in which is included the loans granted by the credit societies to their members, is £25,734,581 computed from the reports of the I.A.O.S., which contain particulars of the business done by the societies taken from their audited balance-sheets. As there are in each year a certain number of societies from which figures are not procurable, the total trade turnover of the movement is greater than is represented above. Information with regard to the educational propaganda of the I.A.O.S. can be had on application to the Secretary, Irish Agricultural Organization Society, The Plunkett House, Dublin.

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